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A

TALE OF THE TIMES.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF A GOSSIP'S STORY.

DEDICATED BY PERMISSION TO MRS. CARTER.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

While Hope pictures to us a flattering scene of future bliss, let us deny its pencil those colours which are too bright to be lasting.—When hearts deserving happiness would unite their fortune, Virtue would crown them with an unfading garland of modest, hurtless flowers; but ill-judging passion will force the gaudier rose into the wreath, whose thorn offends them when its leaves are dropt.

SHERIDAN'S *Rivals*.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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1799.



ADVERTISEMENT.

SOME recent publications may, perhaps, make it necessary for the Author of the subsequent Work, in order to evade the censure of plagiarism, to state, that she could, if necessary, produce the testimony of several respectable witnesses, to prove that the entire plot of the following story, and nearly three parts of the writing, were finished previously to the appearance of the play called "The Stranger" at Drury-lane Theatre; and that she is not conscious of having borrowed one idea from that much-admired performance.

She has seen two works advertised, which she has been informed bear a resemblance to her own plan: "Letters from an Hindoo Rajah;" and

“Waldroff; or, the Dangers of Philosophy.” As she has never met with either, she cannot tell how far her sentiments may be similar to theirs.

There is a class of writers to whom she owns herself under some obligations, as they not only suggested to her the portrait of a complete villain, but also furnished her with several specious passages, which she has appropriated, unaltered, to the character of Fitzosborne. She could specify the quotations, with the names of the authors; but perhaps their *liberality* will be better pleased with a general acknowledgment.

A

TALE OF THE TIMES.

CHAP. I.

Forth steps the spruce philosopher, and tells
Of homogeneal and discordant springs
And principles ; of causes, how they work
By necessary laws their sure effects ;
Of action and reaction. He has found
The source of the disease that nature feels,
And bids the world take heart, and banish fear.

COWPER.

Mrs. PRUDENTIA HOMESPUN again
begs leave to return thanks to the world
for its very favourable reception of her
lucubrations. She is now firmly con-
vinced, that the clamours which are
circulated against the injustice and bad
taste of the times, may be considered

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either

either as the declamations of disappointed ambition, or the ebullitions of malevolent spleen, soured by the success of some happier rival. She conceives herself to be particularly fortunate in existing at a period more favourable to mental exertions than those which have been commonly deemed the golden ages of literature. Contemplating from her easy chair the vast extent of modern discoveries, not only in the sciences, but in morals and government, and extending her meditations from reflection on what her learned co-adjutors have done, to speculation on what they propose doing, she is compelled to acknowledge, that the close of the eighteenth century claims distinguished pre-eminence for those indubitable marks of genius, originality in enterprise, and boldness of invention, over the colder eras of Pericles, Augustus, and the Medici.

Medici. Nay, she will go so far as to affirm, that the labours of the "New Philosophy" will be remembered by their effects, when the theories of all former schools shall be forgotten.

It must be very gratifying to a retired old woman, to consider that her productions may sail down this swelling stream of fame with those of her immortal contemporaries. She confesses that her ideas differ in some respects from theirs; but as every one professes the same end, namely, the improvement of the universe, she rejoices that she is permitted, by the liberality of the times, to disseminate her own peculiar sentiments. If she be of opinion, that Morality appeared to better advantage when she was contented to be the handmaid of Piety, than since she has set up for an independent character; if she be convinced, that the abilities and attainments of man are in

this life so limited, that he will never be able to “ wield these elements,” to endow a machine with intellectual powers, or to array himself with a self-invested immortality; if she be persuaded, that the filial and conjugal ties are no remnants of feudal barbarism, but happy institutions, calculated to promote domestic peace; if she has been taught, that religion is more than sentiment, and female virtue something stronger than exterior decorum; if she shudders at the eloquence which extenuates impiety, terms seduction an amiable frailty, and gaming an elegant amusement condemned by the insane morality of the law: surely she may hope for that celebrity which a bold opposition to received opinions generally ensures. Nay, should she even prefer the Gothic ruff and pinner, as better adapted to British wives and mothers than the loose drapery of Grecian Bacchanals,

Bacchanals, or the more offensive appearance of uncivilized savages, though recommended by the sanction of Parisian enthusiasts, when, with more than Pagan infatuation or cannibal insensibility, they meet to commemorate in their festive dances—not the triumphs of their Gods, nor the death of their enemies—but the murder of their parents, their husbands, and their children; may she not plead a close attention to the costume of manners, and reproach the sensual copyists of a Cleopatra or an Aspasia with want of energy, who adopt all the characteristics of the archetype, of which they exhibit a degrading model?

Her intention in resuming the pen is to enforce her opinions by argument, and to illustrate them by example; and she reveals those intentions thus early, that the lover of the wonderful, and the admirer of the horrific, may not com-

plain of having been cheated into the perusal of a performance that has not only a plan for its conduct, but also a moral tendency in its design. Mrs. Prudentia intends to lead her readers through no other labyrinth than the wiles of systematic depravity, nor to present any object more soul-harrowing than a deceived and entangled, but ultimately penitent heart.

While she confesses that the groundwork of her story has a remote analogy to some well-known facts, she strongly reprobates the idea of personality. The incidents are all her own, and it is only in one portrait that she has attempted to sketch a likeness from nature. She assures the censorious, that, even in that portrait, she has so adjusted the drapery and varied the colours, that it will be impossible for the most curious eye to discover who sat for the outline.

Though

Though regardless whether the fashionable instructors of the day record her as one of their kindred spirits, or condemn her for being a servile admirer of prescribed forms and reprobated restrictions, there is a numerous class of readers, whose favour Mrs. Prudentia is anxiously solicitous to obtain—the truly liberal, and the sincerely good. With candour to forgive small faults, they unite discernment to discover good intentions, and courage to defend the cause of principle against the sarcasms of wit, and the cool contempt of piqued infidelity. To such readers, and such critics, she submits the following pages; and as a proper representative of the illustrious order, she entreats

MRS. CARTER

to accept her public thanks for the invaluable honour of her approbation of

the Writer's former efforts, and her permission to inscribe these pages with her respected name. If the present attempt should appear favourable to the cause of morality and religion, she humbly hopes, that the lenity inseparable from superior talents will pardon those errors in the composition, which an accurate taste must discover and disapprove.

CHAP. II.

The fairest ancestry on earth,
Without desert, is poor;
And every deed of lofty worth
Is but a claim for more.

SIR ELDRED OF THE BOWER.

SOME reasons, which are not necessary to be developed in the following pages, made me wish to take a little excursion from Danbury in the course of last autumn. A generous Public having supplied the means, I hired a one-horse chaise, and taking with me my whole family, consisting of my maid Betty and my favourite old tabby cat, set out for Brighton. I there heard a narrative which made a very deep impression upon my mind; and, as the communicativeness of my disposition will not allow me to conceal any thing which I imagine ca-

pable of conveying instruction, or even innocent amusement, to that worthy set of beings, whom, in common with my sister authors, I term candid readers, I have determined to prefer publishing the History of the Countess of Monteith to a particular description of my own travels. To this resolution I may, perhaps, have been influenced by a culpable degree of modesty. The public, no doubt, are very anxious to know how many miles a-day Betty and I journeyed; at what inns we stopped, and what we had for supper. Could not a florid description bestow some sprigs of fame on the chalky cliffs of Dunstable? Might not the horrors of Woburn sands be rendered more gloomy by a convenient whirlwind, hurrying into the air the arid soil? Is there no old decayed manor-house, where I could call forth the "sheeted dead to squeak and gibber;" or, supposing we

were benighted on Finchley-common, could either Rhætian or Carpathian Alps fix a more appropriate station for the haunts of a banditti? Though in a former publication I have unwarily announced my age and order, Betty, for aught the world knows, may be young and beautiful; nay, she may be an orphan foundling, the heiress of some distinguished family; and I may, if I chuse, after a long series of adventures, unite her in the hymeneal bond with some all-accomplished youth, who had previously rescued us from the robbers after a most bloody engagement. I begin to suspect that I have chosen the less promising, or rather the less lucrative plan; but I entreat my readers to believe, that it is not because I want powers for the terrific and the romantic, that I continue to pursue the moral and the probable. Something must be allowed to my desire.

of supporting that character of firmness ascribed to my sisterhood, and which, though it simply consists in chusing to have our own way, the wits are apt to call pertinacity. I will also candidly own, that, since the superior station in this walk is already occupied by real genius, I have too much prudence to enter into a competition, where I shall be sure to meet with a defeat; and too much pride to enlist among a herd of servile imitators, who mistake confusion for description, and fancy that what is horribly impossible, must be interesting and grand. But, as my days of dotage are not far distant, if lady Monteith should be unfortunate in her appeal for attention, I and Betty may appear upon the scene; even my cat too may be introduced in an episode. I have seen a subject equally unpromising worked up to an astonishing effect, and really admired by readers who

who had been some years out of the nursery :—But, instead of terrifying the world with a denunciation of what I may do, let me hasten to fulfil my present promise.

IT is now more than ten years since Powerscourt House exhibited a scene of festivity and hospitality unrivalled in modern times, and which might serve to recal to the mind of the spectator the splendid fêtes of Kenilworth, where the lady of the lake welcomed the approach of majesty, and the cruel dissolute earl of Leicester sought to divert general attention from his vices by a captivating display of elegance and amusement. The motives of the venerable baronet who inhabited Powerscourt were widely different from those of the haughty favourite of Elizabeth. His life was too inoffensive to fear censure ; his heart never panted for court-favour ; and the praise
of

of magnificence or refined taste presented no attractions to his unobtrusive and benevolent mind. He called all the country together, and strove to make them very happy, because he was very happy himself; and the occasion of this exuberant joy was the union of his only daughter and heiress, Geraldine Powercourt, with James earl of Monteith, a young Nobleman who had just attained complete majority, and acceded to all the splendid titles and fortune of the house of Macdonald.

Beside all the beauty and fashion of North Wales, these distinguished nuptials were honoured by the presence of two deities, generally supposed to be absolutely inimical to each other. Cupid and Plutus, forgetting ancient enmity, agreed jointly to light the Hymeneal torch. It was impossible to suppose a union contracted under a more perfect coincidence.

coincidence of harmonious equality. The families on both sides might be said to lose themselves in the clouds; for their claims to pre-eminence, advancing far beyond the limit of authentic history, soared into regions which no prudent antiquary would dare to explore. The lineal honours of these illustrious families rested upon a surer basis than mere oral tradition. Sir William Powerscourt could point out the spot of ground where his Ordovician ancestor harangued his vassals before he mounted his scythe-armed car, and led them to join the British forces assembled at Caradoc: and an aunt of lord Monteith's preserved the beak of the galley, which conveyed Donald king of the Isles from Illa, when he paid a visit of ceremony to his contemporary Fergus, some hundred years prior to the invasion of the Romans. It is true, that some incredulous critics, whom
nothing

nothing can convince, doubted whether the feudal customs, with which Sir William embellished his narrative, existed at that remote period; and I have heard a whisper, that the venerable relic which lady Madelina so carefully preserved was nothing more than the remains of a great gilded dragon, originally suspended over a Chinese temple belonging to her ladyship's *maternal* great-grandfather, though so happily executed, that, like Hamlet's cloud, you might say it was equally like a "camel, or an oufel, or a whale."

But though these vestiges of remote superiority might rather excite the doubts than fix the conviction of the observer of costume, the Macdonalds and Powercourts preferred unquestinable claims to the honours of antiquity,—extensive influence and ample possessions. It sometimes happens, that close attention to adventitious

ventitious or fantastic appendages induces us to overlook inherent permanent qualities. Lady Madelina's zeal for the dignity of her family was so warmly exercised in the defence of old Donald's galley, that she had no leisure to advert to the fearless intrepidity and the generous liberality with which her ancestors defended the rights of their clan, and succoured their oppressed dependants during the period that the house of Stuart sat upon the Scottish throne. "They shone the glory of the north" till after the restoration; but the reign of Charles the second, so fatal to principle and morality, first contaminated the house of Monteith, and sapped the foundations of its feudal greatness. In the voluptuous court of that dissipated monarch, the then earl forgot the wild shores of Loch Lomond, and the "flowery borders of the ancient Forth;" and abandoning his
castle

castle to ruin, and his dependants to despair, glittered a faint satellite in the train of tinsel greatness. His extravagance and prodigality were in some degree repaired by the alliance of his successor with the heiress of a rich Blackwell-hall factor; but the archives of the family are rather silent upon that head, and lady Madelina could never relate a single anecdote explanatory of the event of those disgraceful nuptials. Since that period, the Macdonalds had persevered in the plan of leaving the family estate, clear from incumbrances, to the eldest son. The younger sons either fell in the defence of their country, or starved in some obscure corner, while the daughters had only their high birth to add to the personal qualifications of merit and beauty, advantages not always sufficient to attract the mercenary heart of man. With no other portion lady Madelina herself bestowed

flowed on the fortunate head of the house of Frazer, the inestimable treasure of her hand. He was indeed far advanced into the vale of years, and his title was only simple Sir Simon; but her ladyship preferred him to all the dukes, marquisses, and earls, who, according to the indubitable testimony of herself and her maid Peggy, had for more than twenty years unremittingly implored her compassion.

The father of the young earl, whose nuptials with the heiress of Powerscourt have been announced in the beginning of this chapter, fell a victim to the demon of modern honour, about the same time that the pale orgies of dissipation had made a visible inroad in his lady's health. The shock at the dreadful circumstances of his exit hastened the cruel attacks of disease, and she expired a few months after her lord. The noble pair had ever found each other's society too
vapid

vapid to dispel the gloom of one domestic evening; yet his lordship conceived himself obliged to resent the intrusion of a young officer, who entered her ladyship's box at the opera at a time when the earl was of her party. He fell at the first fire, and the countess found it impossible to survive him. The scandalous chronicles of the age asserted, that the colonel's appearance was neither unexpected nor unwelcome to any but the earl, and that disappointment and the necessity of seclusion and oeconomic retrenchment, barbed the mortal dart of woe in the bosom of the fair inconsolable. Till I am convinced that jealousy is the only motive which can direct the attention of a husband to his own wife, and that connubial sorrow wants energy to break the fragile thread of female existence, I shall adhere to my own representation of this catastrophe.

Lord

Lord Monteith, following the example of his progenitors, left his estate totally unincumbered to his only son James. His beautiful daughter Arabella found a protectress in the friendship of her aunt, lady Madelina, who adopted her as her own daughter, and publicly declared her resolution, in case she should produce no heir to the house of Frazer, to bequeath to her all the ample possessions with which sir Simon's tender gratitude had endowed his beloved bride. At the age of seventeen, after having experienced the adulation and the luxury of two London winters, the lovely Arabella set out for her aunt's castle situated in the wilds of Lochaber, where, by the indisposition of sir Simon, now reduced to a state bordering upon second childhood, she had the melancholy prospect of being perfectly immured.

Her

Her brother's plans were more eligible and agreeable. His guardians insisted that in his education he should pursue the routine usually adopted by young men of his elevated rank. He had been entered at one of our public schools, and thence removed to the University. To counteract a dangerous propensity to the fatal allurements of Newmarket, it was proposed immediately after his father's death, that he should make the tour of Europe. He returned when of age, assumed the fortunes of his family, and with them the representation of the ancient peerage of Scotland in the British Parliament, an honour which had been for some time enjoyed by his ancestors.

Since the forms of his election rendered his presence necessary at Holyrood House, he could not avoid paying a visit to the seat of his family. His
manners

manners were popular, his countenance strikingly prepossessing, and his person dignified, athletic, and graceful. The Highlanders recognized in the "bonny Lad" the true representative of the house of Macdonald; and the ancient dependants, who, since their lairds had deserted Monteith, vegetated on the spot which the attachments of their youth rendered eminently dear to them, led their young master the tour of his domain, and pointed out to him its local advantages. They endeavoured to direct his attention to the massy grandeur of his castle walls, the extensive prospect enjoyed from its turrets, and the faded magnificence of its mouldering furniture. They repeatedly assured him, that in his grandfather's time Monteith boasted a distinguished preference over the abode of any other Highland chieftain. The young Nobleman was not passionately attached

attached to ruins ; the stormy winds, howling through the long galleries, disturbed his repose, and he wished for no nearer acquaintance with the genius of the tempest. He bestowed with a liberal hand such relief as would afford poverty a temporary aid ; but, without exerting sufficient patience to investigate the cause of the calamity, or sufficient courage to redress the evils which even a cursory glance discovered, he hastened to Kinloch Castle, to pay his dutiful respects to lady Madelina.

Neither the manners nor the residence of her ladyship were calculated to remove the disgust with which " Scot and Scotland had inspired him." The house was situated on a bare precipice, the foot of which was washed by the stormy sea that separated the main land from the Hebrides. When its amiable mistress removed from the deserted walls
of

of Monteith, she carried with her all her "Household Gods," I mean, the venerable inhabitants of the picture gallery, and the screens, chairs, and tapestry hangings, with which the white-armed spinsters of Macdonald had successively decorated their family-seat. Sir Simon, doubtless, felt sincere exultation at this valuable acquisition; he only stipulated that the remains of his progenitors should not yield their places to the new comers. A coalition was therefore formed, and every wall and apartment in the castle was crowded with multiplied garniture. Screen concealed screen, chair supported chair; a stripe of Jacob meeting Esau repaired the disastrous rents too visible in the taking of Troy, and puzzled the Ciceroni who attempted to unravel the confused history; while Frazers and Macdonalds, placed in full opposition,

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frowned fierce defiance upon each other, regardless of the bond which now united the once rival families, and ungrateful to lady Madelina's eloquence, who gratuitously performed the part of eulogist to them all.

On the third day after her nephew's arrival, when she had explained the family exploits to the eleventh century, he unluckily recollected a most pressing engagement which called him instantly to London. The occasion was so urgent, that he could not possibly stay to hear the fate of some collateral branches which were then divided from the parent stock. Lord Monteith threw himself into his post-chaise, and so strongly did the connections of his ancestors rouse his domestic feelings, that he could think of nothing but getting a good husband for his sister, to free her from her confinement, till different scenes excited gayer ideas.

CHAP. III.

In this calm seat he drew the healthful gale,
The happy monarch of his sylvan train;
Here, sided by the guardians of his fold,
He walk'd his rounds, and cheer'd his blest domain;
His days, the days of unstain'd nature, roll'd,
Replete with peace and joy, like patriarchs of old.

THOMSON.

IN the preceding Chapter I introduced my readers to the family of the bridegroom; but I must bestow several on that of the bride.

Sir William Powerscourt's was certainly a most singular character, and in one particular he widely differed from many gentlemen of his rank in society. His strong attachment to the seat of his ancestors was more the result of generous philanthropy than of any lucrative consideration. It is true, he considered Powerscourt-house as circumscribing

within its domain all the beauties that fancy ever feigned ; but, as he rode round his estate, his feelings resembled those of a conscientious guardian rather than of a self-accountable owner, and the landlord and master were in his beneficent bosom ever sunk in the milder qualities of the protector and the friend. His hospitable doors were open to indigence ; his delicacy was never hurt by the simplicity of rustic manners ; and though the indolence of his temper sometimes prevented him from taking an active part in restraining oppression, or introducing merit to its deserved reward, his liberal purse was always ready to remedy the defect. “ My good neighbour “ Jones,” said he one day, “ I certainly “ might write to the lord lieutenant, “ and get that rogue of an adjutant “ broke, who would not admit that “ your son David was of a proper size “ for

“ for the militia, though he swore-in
“ other substitutes two inches shorter;
“ but perhaps the man has nothing to
“ live upon but his commission, and,
“ being very poor, is forced to do dirty
“ actions. Here; remember me to
“ David; tell him, that I like a lad of
“ spirit; and there are the ten guineas he
“ was disappointed of.” A little time
afterward, in consequence of some nefarious proceedings being discovered, the adjutant waited upon sir William to entreat his intercession with lord W. in his behalf. He pleaded long-service and the hurry of business in his defence, and hinted at the wants of a large family.
“ Sir,” said sir William, “ I dare say that
“ what you tell me is very true; but as it
“ is not my own affair, I don’t like to
“ write to my kinsman or trouble him
“ about it. But as you seem to have
“ puzzled yourself a little in these army
“ matters,

“ matters, I think you had better try some
“ other plan of life. I can put you into
“ a farm, and make you gamekeeper
“ of one of my manors; and I hope
“ you won’t think it an employ beneath
“ you, for I shall always be glad to see
“ you at Powerscourt.” The offer was
accepted; and sir William afterwards
owned, that, beside two years’ rent,
he lost a considerable sum with which
he had entrusted him, to enable him to
set up; but his benevolent heart never
suffered him to wish the deed undone:
“ for,” said he, “ though I believe the
“ man was no better than a cheat, his
“ wife appeared to be a very notable
“ woman, and brought up her family
“ very well.”

Sir William did not marry till he was
much on the wrong side of forty; and
even then that event proceeded from the
same principles which governed all his ac-
tions.

tions. The wife of a neighbouring gentleman delicately hinted, that one of her daughters was so deeply in love with him, that death must be the inevitable consequence of his obduracy. The good baronet was thunderstruck; he had no predilection for marriage, and certainly no preference for the young lady thus obtruded upon his choice. His conscience entirely vindicated him from any wicked design of stealing the fair one's affections; neither his glass nor his flatterers had ever attributed to him the most distant resemblance to an Adonis, and he wondered much that any body should fall in love with his brown bob and Kevenhuller hat; but since it was so, (and the lady's mother protested she did not exaggerate,) he never should enjoy any peace of mind, if he could think himself the cause of making a fellow-creature miserable (for sir William could not

give entire credit to the dying part of the story). Rather than have such a weight upon his conscience, he would marry.

• Lady Powerscourt, however, very soon after her marriage, discovered that she had made a great mistake, and was incautious enough to disclose the secret to her husband. It was not from the brown bob nor Kevenhuller hat that the god of love took aim when he pierced her tender bosom, nor was the mortal shaft barbed by the virtues which adorned the respectable character to which they were appendages. Like Hudibras's Cupid, he certainly

“ — Fix'd his stand

“ Upon a wealthy jointure land.”

Powerscourt-house possessed irresistible attractions, and she had heard her papa and mamma frequently assert, that if sir William would but marry a woman of taste, it might be made one of the sweetest

sweetest places in all North Wales. She knew that sir Ralph Morgan's lady spent all the winter at Bath, the spring in London, the summer at her country-seat, and in the autumn took a tour; that she drove four in hand, gave balls, kept a groom of the chambers, and a French waiting-maid, had twelve new dresses a-year, and set the fashions for all the country; yet sir Ralph's estate was not half so large as sir William's. What heart could resist such invincible attractions? She immediately fell very deeply in love.

I have in a former publication ventured to give my opinion, that the two faces of Hymen are not exact counterparts to each other. The smiling countenance which fronts the long vista leading to his temple, has few traits of similitude to the austere physiognomy which is descried by those who, after

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they have offered sacrifice, retire behind his altar. The discussion of preliminaries might have convinced the lady that the nuptial cup contained some drops of an acid quality. To the charms of Powerscourt she had annexed one grand ingredient, which unhappily did not exist, at least not in its supposed magnitude, I mean, the uneasiness of sir William's disposition. Though "gentle as zephyr blowing underneath a violet" upon most occasions, he had upon others a little of the old bachelor's tenacity about him. He would keep lady Powerscourt a coach and six with all his heart, but he did not like ladies driving four in hand. She might have half a dozen English waiting-women if she pleased, and as many Welch ones, but he did not approve of French filles de chambre. He had no objection to her giving balls to the neighbouring
young

young ladies, and she might make them as happy as she could ; but he thought that married ladies ought not to be jiggling about themselves : and as to dress, she might be clothed every day in silver brocade ; but his wife should never wear feathers and flowers in her head-dress, like a stage-player.

The grand point of dispute, however, was the occupation of the four seasons. He was willing to take her to town for three months, because the country must be rather dull to women in winter, as they could neither shoot nor hunt ; and if she were not well, he would accompany her to Bath or any where that would do her service ; but to live at Powerscourt only three months—what would all his neighbours say, and how would his tenants go on without him ! My lady strove to convince him that their opinions were not worth regarding ; but sir William was

firm. He had long considered them as rational creatures, and he could not hastily renounce that opinion; beside, he was fond of farming, and deeply engaged in schemes of agricultural improvement; and if he stayed so little at home, he must either be the dupe of imposition, or renounce those pursuits. Here his obliging consort hinted, that, since he was so engaged in rural pursuits, business allowed him a fair excuse for absence, and she would be willing occasionally to dispense with his attendance. Sir William was not remarkably quick of apprehension; and, certainly, most bridegrooms in his situation would have been inclined to refer the lady's proposal rather to the exuberant desire of gratifying his peculiar inclination, than to any latent wish of being deprived of his society. He saw it quite in that point of view; and though he made no answer

at

at the time, yet a retrospective consideration of the ineffable condescension which prompted her to give up what she had repeatedly declared to be the greatest blessing of her existence, his dear conversation, rather than tear him from scenes to which he was attached, convinced him that he ought to make some sacrifice to reward such self-denying complacency. One journey to Bath was therefore promised, an annual visit to London had been before tacitly agreed to, and I am not certain whether the overflowings of gratitude might not have compelled the good baronet to submit to be whirled about eighty miles a-day along rough roads by way of taking an autumnal tour, had not his lady, instead of rewarding his compliance by a gentle smile, assumed something of a mortified aspect when he announced his design of accompanying her. He was willing to attribute this sudden

sudden change to her desire of having the magnificent plans that she had just formed for the improvement of Powerscourt carried into execution under her own inspection; and this hope reconciled him to schemes which had at first met with some opposition. He had objected to her design of cutting down the long avenue of oaks which led to the house, and converting the ground into a sweeping lawn, dotted with lilacs and laburnums, interspersed with Chinese temples and leaden statues. He was equally averse to the removal of his straight yew hedges; for, though all the world was against him, he conceived them more natural than the sharp angles of that modern embellishment, a serpentine walk. He thought too that the stag's horns and cross-bows were as proper internal ornaments as papier-machée decorations; and many a bitter sigh did it
cost

cost him, when his lady's mamma and sisters joined in protesting, that, unless the dark Gothic windows and hideous tapestry hangings were removed from the drawing-room, and light sashes and India paper substituted in their stead, they should fall into hysterics every time they went into the room ; but his transport at the idea that these proposed alterations had tended to attach his wife to a spot which would be honoured with such indubitable proofs of her taste and genius, determined him to be a passive spectator of every proposed alteration.

It was in the month of September that sir William was made the happiest of men. Two months were allotted to ceremonious visitings, during which the nuptial retinue moved over every mountain, dale, forest, and glen, which the temerity of the coachman pronounced passable. Sir William had the gallantry
always

always to accompany his lady ; he heard all her wedding paraphernalia universally admired, and his own brown and gold pronounced immensely becoming, while his point ruffles were cried up as the very summit of elegance. Unaccustomed, however, to the duties of the toilet, he grew weary of white gloves and powdered perukes ; and, recollecting with pleasure that all his visits were paid, he resumed his drab frock and brown bob with singular complacency. He was meditating a quiet ride round his farm, when my lady, entering, interrupted his agreeable reverie by informing him, that she had received a letter from lady Morgan, who was then at Bath, and insisted upon it that they must come there immediately. The most divine actor was just come out, who infinitely transcended Garrick when in the meridian of his powers ; beside, all the world was there, and her
numerous

numerous acquaintance were anxious to be introduced to a lady of whose beauty and accomplishments they heard so much. To her ladyship's intimation that they must set off immediately, sir William replied, that it certainly was impossible; there were more than fifty workmen employed in embellishing the house and gardens: but the provident forecast of lady Powerscourt had provided an unanswerable refutation of this objection. She had engaged a most capital improver to come down, and find out all the capabilities which the house and local scenery possessed. Sir William might rely implicitly upon the taste and judgment of this gentleman, who had given satisfaction to most of the nobility and gentry in the kingdom, by exercising what might almost be called the magic power of turning every place into something exactly opposite to what it was before.

before. The family archives intimate that sir William was more alarmed than delighted at this information; and it is supposed that the journey to Bath would have been deferred till after Mr. Outline had finished Powerscourt, if my lady had not been taken ill with a violent stomach disorder the next morning, for which the physicians could find no remedy but an immediate use of those salubrious waters which King Bladud fortunately discovered, to the unspeakable advantage of all tender husbands and indulgent fathers.

CHAP. IV.

There Affectation with a sickly mien
Shows in her face the roses of eighteen;
Practis'd to lisp, and hang the head aside,
Faints into airs, and languishes with pride;
On the rich quilt sinks with becoming woe,
Wrapp'd in a gown for sickness and for show.

RAPE OF THE LOCK.

THE speedy abatement of lady Powerscourt's complaint announced the wisdom of the prescription; but she was a long time extremely languid, out of spirits, and too nervous to bear the fatigue of returning home to the "flaky snow" and "warping wind," that were concomitant to the mountains surrounding Powerscourt. In proof that her case required a warmer situation, the very proposal of leaving Bath brought on a relapse, and the extreme delicacy of her health would not even suffer her to spare
sir

sir William just to take a little peep to see how Mr. Outline went on with his extensive projects. Profound politicians are generally believed to have a real as well as an ostensible reason for their actions; and though her ladyship pleaded, that if he did go she might probably expire without having his dear hand to close *her* eyes, it is suspected, that, like a good wife, she wished to keep *his* from witnessing scenes which might irritate a more professed stoic. Convinced that Mr. Outline's taste would appear to consummate advantage if no impediments obstructed his designs, she dragged sir William every night to the rooms or the theatre, places she was absolutely obliged to attend, in order to prevent the low fever which attacked her every evening that she was persuaded to pass at home.

In a little time the pensive languor of lady Powerscourt's countenance, unfortunately

fortunately mistaken for the gloom of discontent, and the singular manners of her constant attendant, excited general observation; and the report that she was a pretty young creature sacrificed by her mercenary parents to a rich, foolish, jealous, old innamorato, gave an eclat to her character, which neither constant indisposition, nor the most scrupulous attention to the variations of dress would otherwise have excited. Ladies of the first consequence invited her to their whist parties; her box at the play attracted the most elegant beaus. The former found that she lost money with the best grace imaginable, and the latter discovered that she had an infinitude of wit. That merciless complaint *ennui*, which all sir William's long histories and still longer arguments had rather increased than diminished, fled at the first touch of the fascinating wand of public

public admiration. Some say, that the tyrant only yielded one victim to secure another; it is certain, that while lady Powerscourt dressed, talked, laughed, and was considered as in the highest ton, sir William concluded a long letter to his steward with a complaint, "That he
" felt exactly like a fish out of water."

Intoxicated by pleasure and adulation, her ladyship anxiously wished to extend her triumphs beyond the narrow bound of a Bath season. The itinerant world, at whose idol shrine she had resolved to sacrifice, had now transferred its scene of empire to London, and she was impatient to shine a peerless star in a new hemisphere; but some difficulties stood in the way. She had seen enough of life to be convinced that sir William's stiff drapery, formal manners, and obsolete opinions, formed as direct a contrast to the easy accommodating laws of modern

etiquette, as the sturdy oak of the forest does to the bending ease of the pliant willow. She had heard observations infinitely to his disadvantage ; and though she could collect no more than that he was a bore and a quiz, she was very sure that these cabalistic terms of fashion must import every thing that was horrid and detestable. Since her *entrée* in the great world, bound her for life to such a partner, she must make the best of her hard fate, and endeavour to balance the misery of his society for one part of the year against the advantage of spending his money during the remainder. Lady Morgan had assured her, that of all places in the world a husband was least wanted at London. The late hours and perpetual routine of engagements left no leisure for domestic conversation ; and, she added, sir Ralph was so entirely of her mind, that he always devoted

the

the time she spent there to the amusements of hunting and shooting grouse.

Having received information that the improvement of Powerscourt had advanced so far as to defy the possibility of their being completed, or indeed comprehended, by any person but the projector, she became very anxious that sir William should look a little after his estate, and at least be there in time to attend the approaching audit. But the worthy baronet was by this time become very uneasy about the stability of possessions more fragile than the wide domains of which his ancestors had left him unrivalled lord. His good sense taught him the wide dissimilarity between his own manners and those of the gay fantastic train who constantly hovered round his lady whenever she appeared in public. He was certain that the *monkies* (for he honoured them with that appellation) would

would be pert enough to laugh at his way when his back was turned; and he had seen so many strange things in this world, that if he returned to Wales instead of accompanying his lady to town, they might fill her head with stranger notions than somehow or other the poor thing had already acquired. Her present situation rendered contradiction very difficult; but if he should like her behaviour in town no better than he had done at Bath, he resolved, when once his son and heir was safe in the world, to tell her very plainly, that she was welcome to make herself as happy as she could at Powerscourt, but that he never would agree to any more journies of pleasure. Solacing himself with this scheme of future resistance, he yielded to the present torrent; and, assuring her that he had no wish to return to Wales

without her, they set off for Berkeley-square.

I would not recommend the countenances of the Powerscourts on their arrival in London, as models to a painter who wished to embody the fair idea of connubial happiness. Though the lady's might derive a few lively traits from the hope that she was entering upon a scene of conquest, yet the apprehension that Sir William was projecting secret hostilities placed her exactly in the situation of a general whose movements are carefully watched by a strong army of observation which it would be imprudent openly to attack. Sir William's dislike of the journey increased every step he took, and he entered London with a firm expectation that the place and the people would prove equally disagreeable. In lieu of the taste and elegance with which lady Powerscourt was every where fascinated,

fascinated, he saw nothing but impertinence and frippery. The late hours were insufferable to a man who rose at six, dined at three, and dismissed his household with family prayers at ten. He was shocked at the refinement which banished serious discussion from polished circles; and he never could fully comprehend the duties of laborious idleness, the arcana of modern visiting, the vanity of universal acquaintance, or those restraints upon the emotions of genuine nature which fashion prescribes and insipidity adopts. Every thing sir William heard and saw had to him an air of the marvellous. He could scarcely believe that the admirer of *vertù*, who piqued himself upon his knowledge of Greek and Roman ruins, might be ignorant of the architectural magnificence of the capital of the British empire. He thought the pure honour of a peer or a senator must

be sullied by condescending to admit a professed sharper to be the companion of his convivial hours. He never could reconcile Sunday routs with his notion of a steady well-regulated family; and he absolutely interdicted lady Powerscourt from associating with what was then termed the *first* circle, when he came to know that some of its fair members occasionally dispensed with the sanctions of female decorum.

This way of thinking was certainly very singular; but Sir William's prejudices in these and a variety of other instances were not to be vanquished by the light artillery of raillery, which was frequently played off against him in public, or by the more formidable battery of sighs, tears, and faintings, by which his gentle lady strove to induce him to speak and look like other people. Even the tender argument, that a man
who

who really loved his wife must adopt all her sentiments, and conform to all her wishes, was ineffectually opposed to the rigid pertinacity with which sir William defended the principles that he had ever considered to be the out-works of religion and morality. The circumstances which had induced him to put his "free condition into circumspection" did not appear to him to favour the claims of female supremacy; and he entertained the very heterodox notion, that when a lady falls violently in love, the favoured gentleman has a right to expect that she will make an obliging attentive wife, rather more studious of his humour, than devoted to the indulgence of her own. This is not the only notion in which the lords of the creation are misled by that vanity of which nature has given them a preponderant share. The delicacy of the female mind

may very possibly be attached to the splendid titles, large possessions, or handsome equipages of a gentleman, when the gentleman himself, considered apart from all these appendages, would never *strike* any body superior to his dairy-maid. Would it not be unjust to charge a countess with inconsistency, because she neglected her noble earl, when all the time her heart had been only attracted by the lustre of his coronet? The noble earl's chagrin entirely proceeds from the delusions of self-flattery, which whispered that his individual self was the all-potent load-stone, when in reality the magnetic influence darted from his elegant villa and liberal settlement; or perhaps an enamelled watch and diamond hoop-ring, might form the infatuating talisman. I hope this explanatory rule will be applied to all matches which proceed from the strong attachment of a

“ discreet

“discreet young creature” to a “very good sort of a man a few years older than herself.” It might preserve many a respectable bachelor from the vexation of disappointment, and prevent the censorious from fixing the charge of inconsistency upon many a lady’s character, who rather deserves admiration for unshaken constancy. But to return from my digression—

Fashion, who in one of her whimsical moments elevated lady Powerscourt into a first-rate toast at Bath, capriciously denied her in London the eclat to which she now conceived herself entitled. The gloss of novelty was past, and the attraction of the ridiculous was lessened by the appearance of fresh eccentricities in newer characters. She dressed with greater taste, and her repartees possessed superior wit and brilliancy; but the

gazer and the listener no longer announced her triumph.

My matronly friends assure me, that one prime ingredient of marriage felicity is, that you always have a helpmate at hand, to whom you transfer the burden of faults and misfortunes. Lady Powercourt could find no other reason for her going out of fashion, than that sir William, not content with his own singularities, had absolutely prohibited her from dashing in a grand style. No entreaties would prevail upon him to let lord Jehu drive her in his phaeton up the park in a morning, though his ponies were the sweetest little spirited creatures in the world, and the ride would be of infinite service to her health and spirits. Her head was nine inches lower than any body's at the opera, and though most ladies wore fruit and vegetables by way of aigrette, and lady Morgan sported

ported a beautiful bunch of amethyst grapes with a little gold chaffinch pecking at them, she herself must wear nothing but plain riband and blond. She might not even play for gold; nay, sir William was so puritanic, and such an enemy to a little harmless mirth, that she was forced to be as cautious in avoiding a *double entendre* or a witticism upon priestcraft, as if she were wise to the Archbishop of Canterbury. What woman of spirit could brook such restrictions? If she must be moped up, better return and rusticate at Powerscourt, than sit like Tantalus within reach of the desired enjoyment which she was not permitted to share. She hinted to her husband something like a wish to do so in a moment of moody discontent, occasioned by his peremptory declaration that she should not go to a masquerade, though the ticket was pro-

cured, the dress bespoke, and the party formed for the happy occasion. He for once cordially acquiesced in her wishes, by declaring, that it was the very plan he meant to propose. "I am sure, my dear," said he, "your health has been greatly injured by living in this smoky unwholesome place; and the late hours and constant racketing have worn your poor nerves all to pieces. You have quite lost your colour, and are not half so cheerful as you used to be when galloping over the Welsh mountains; but a little good country air will soon set all to rights again; and so take leave of your friends; for, since you wish it, I am determined to set off for Powerscourt on Monday morning."

The general tenor of sir William Powerscourt's character was yielding philanthropy, but he could at times assume
a quiet

a quiet firmness which disconcerted opposition. Her ladyship must either dispute or faint, and she chose the latter as the most gentlewomanlike style of contradiction. Sir William was very sorry, and very assiduous to restore her; but the reviving fair saw no signs of compunction in his countenance, nor did he, by inquiring after the cause of her disorder, give her an opportunity of pointing out the only means of preventing a relapse. Indeed, he was become rather callous to die-away arguments; and though his native candour spurned suspicion, their frequent recurrence led him to doubt the existence of the stomach spasms whence this disagreeable excursion had originated. I mean by these observations to caution my readers to be very sparing in the use of these *chef-d'œuvres* of female generalship, because the too great frequency of

an ambuscade only puts the enemy more constantly upon his guard. Violent hysterics, floods of tears, and every sign of gentle despondency, confirmed sir William in the conviction that his lady's life depended upon her removing immediately from a place where she was so dreadfully indisposed; and she found herself on Monday morning on the road to Caernarvonshire, maugre the opinion of all the fine ladies of her acquaintance, united to her own, that she was much too weak to bear the journey, and would certainly expire before she got twenty miles out of London.

CHAP. V.

With here a fountain, never to be play'd;
And there a summer house, that knows no shade;
Here Amphitrite sails through myrtle bow'rs;
There gladiators fight, or die, in flow'rs.

POPE.

THE traveller who pursues a road with which he is unacquainted always finds unexpected pleasures mingled with unforeseen misfortunes. A bright sunbeam often dissipates the gloom of a dreary country; the inconvenience of a rugged road is frequently counterbalanced by the magnificence of the surrounding scenery; an occasional companion relieves fatigue; and even the mortification of a bad inn and indifferent accommodations generally tends to heighten the relish of future convivial enjoyments.

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The pilgrim who speeds along the road of life generally encounters a similar mixture of pain and pleasure; not merely in the aggregate, but intimately blended in every event. The rose grows so close to the thorn, that you cannot gather it without encountering a painful sensation; while on the other hand our attention is diverted from the minute wound by the exquisite fragrance of the flower. The pains and pleasures of man, like the world he inhabits, partake of the vicissitude of his own character. I beg pardon for these seemingly irrelevant reflections; but the garrulity of old age can seldom resist an opportunity of moralising.

Nothing could be more melancholy than the situation in which I left lady Powerscourt in my last Chapter, except that of some fair damsel in romance, whom a terrible Saracen is carrying away to his
enchanted

enchanted castle. The twentieth milestone was passed, yet Atropos, though oft invoked, forebore to extend her mortal shears, when an unexpected source of consolation suddenly presented itself—not in the shape of a knight armed *cap-a-pié* with spear and buckler, nor in the more modern accoutrement of a fine gentleman with a brace of pistols; and, to say the truth, though a rencontre with lord Jehu just at this crisis might be a very popular incident, I am glad that sir William, for whose character I cannot help feeling a degree of regard, was not drawn into any military adventures. I enjoy the idea of his respectable figure, perfectly satisfied with his victory, riding composedly by the side of his chariot, and wondering if he might venture to get into it at the next stage. Lady Powerscourt's consolations were derived from the philosophic temperament of her

own

own mind. She recollected that she should have it in her power to display such a wardrobe as had never before blazed on the astonished inhabitants of Caernarvonshire: that Powerscourt was now converted into a perfect paradise, and she should reign the unrivalled Armida of the enchanting region, every part of which would announce her directing taste. Prudence stepped in also to the aid of Patience, and whispered that though she had been defeated in a conflict for superiority, yet, if she carefully kept her own secret, sir William would never betray her, and she had only to say that she was tired of London, which was in reality nearer the truth than she imagined. Perhaps a degree of remaining pique might suggest the resolution that, as she now perfectly understood her husband's temper, it was only studying the art of tormenting instead

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of the art of cajoling on any future occasion; and then, though she might not be able to triumph, she would at least make good her retreat.

These placable ideas so happily prevailed, that when they stopped at St. Alban's for refreshment, her ladyship on alighting offered her hand to the baronet with the best grace in the world, and anticipated his inquiries how she had borne her journey, by declaring that he was quite right in supposing the country air would do her good, for that she already found herself much better. Sir William was equally delighted with the change, and puzzled to guess at the means by which it had been effected. Somebody or something was very much to blame; but for his life he could hardly tell where the fault lay, whether in the contagious atmosphere of London, in his lady's caprice, or his own suspicions.

suspensions. However, he now found himself invested with plenitude of power; and, like a prudent monarch, he began to consider in what way he should exert it; but his generous heart had been so softened by his lady's concessions, that he positively resolved upon no further exercise of his prerogative, than that lady Powerscourt should pay her formal visits by herself in future, and that he would never more wear his white and silver.

Peace and unanimity prevailed during the remainder of the journey. It was night when they entered the old mansion, and the examination of its beauties was deferred till the next morning; but the tranquillity of the good baronet was then put to a severe trial. The saloon was certainly fitted up in the most elegant manner; but the housekeeper removed every idea of comfort by her information that the chimney smoked so violently,

violently, that it was absolutely impossible to have a fire; and, consequently, that it must be useless nine months in the year. The aspect of the dining apartment was equally dreary; the prospect indeed was enchanting, but the sashes started about an inch from the frames; and the warped doors were unfavourable either to a graceful exit or entrance, as it was only by means of kicking and pushing that any one could either advance or retreat; and as the chimney, the windows, and the doors, were all constructed uniformly, any alteration was dangerous, perhaps impracticable. The ready invention of lady Powercourt discovered, that, as these could only be proper for summer apartments, some little snug parlour could be fitted up for general residence; and they proceeded to the library. This was lofty and extensive; but Mr. Outline's taste

taste for decoration seemed to have annihilated its primary intention; for the multitude of busts, models, and statues, left no space for books. Sir William continued his moralising tour through the rest of the state apartments, which might be truly said "to keep the promise to the eye, and break it to the sense," and concluded his journey in the great hall, where, as he sought in vain for the long oaken tables and forms which used to administer to the regalement of his tenants at Christmas and other seasons of periodical festivity, her ladyship reminded him, how charmingly it was now appropriated to the purpose of a ball-room or a theatre. She directed his attention to a light gallery at the upper end designed for an orchestra, and beautifully decorated; but this elegant embellishment was not in a state to bear inspection, it having broken down
with

with old Morgan the blind harper, who had exhibited in it the preceding evening just by way of hansel, he said, while the housemaids and gardeners were footing it a little below for recreation because his Honor was coming home again.

Sir William left my lady to construct ways and means for supporting the tottering edifice, and, with a deep sigh and a secret murmur against new-fangled trumpery, proceeded to examine the out-door scenes. The taste of Mr. Outline for objects had induced him to remove several useful edifices to inconvenient situations, while he occupied their places with erections of no form nor likelihood, which continually drew from the impatient baronet the exclamations of "What is this for?" and "What does this mean?" The stews were all drained, and their places occupied by the ruins of a naval amphitheatre,

tre, while the stream that supplied them was taught to hop from pebble to pebble in diminutive imitation of old Conway's foaming flood, which roared, in proud magnificence, at a little distance. The windmill had given way to a temple dedicated to Æolus; and the pigeon-house was succeeded by an aviary of foreign birds, none of which, in sir William's opinion, were so beautiful as the goldfinch, or sung like the nightingale. As walls were unpicturesque, they, and the fruit-trees which they supported, were everywhere metamorphosed into ha-ha's! A fine grove of oaks, which screened the house from the north winds, was cut down to admit the prospect of a bleak mountain; and the place of the hardy foresters was occupied by the tender magnolio and frail accacia, at least by their remains, for the beautiful exotics had been already killed by the frosts, or
broken

broken by vernal storms. In short, to adopt the owner's description of the house and gardens, "The former was
" very tasty and very inconvenient; and
" in the latter there was nothing that
" you wanted, but there were ruins and
" heathen gods in abundance."

Sir William's disgust did not prevent lady Powerscourt from exhibiting herself to infinite advantage in the office of Ciceroni, and she continued to point out the beauties of the new improvements, till her neighbours had exhausted every topic of adulation, and her own tongue grew weary of the pleasing tale. It is suggested, that the inconveniencies I have enumerated afterwards struck her more forcibly than any one else; and that her reason for hating Powerscourt was, that no human creature could be well or comfortable in such a cold dreary wilderness sort of a place. Nor did

did her splendid attire afford a more permanent satisfaction: in some articles of dress she was anticipated, in others outshone; and none excited astonishment after their first exhibition. Alas! if happiness be not seated in the mind, even the gratification of our wishes will not ensure its possession.

A few months after her ladyship's return to Powerscourt, my Heroine first saw the light; and though sir William had rather it had been a boy, he received the little stranger with all the enthusiastic joy of the fondest parental tenderness. He thought the winning ways of the dear little cherub must communicate that happiness to the maternal bosom, which somehow or other (a favourite expression of sir William's) it had hitherto failed to experience. But while the exuberance of his own joy was displaying itself in the usual stile of overflowing benevolence

névolence and hospitality, his lady was ruminating on the possibility of being at Chester races; and, contrary to the opinion of her matronly friends, she resolved on the hazardous expedient of a too early appearance in public. A severe cold was the immediate consequence; and the neglect of the first maternal duty, joined to inattention to her own safety, was soon observed to have occasioned a total change in her constitution. Years of ill health, confinement, and severe suffering, proved the melancholy forerunner of premature death.

From the account I have already given of lady Powerscourt, the reader will not suppose that patience tempered the bitter cup of woe with its lenient sweets. Her mind was destitute of natural strength, her temper possessed no native gentleness, her education taught her rather

to conceal than to subdue the irritability of her disposition; and, being solely confined to the acquirement of a few external accomplishments, no mental treasures were laid up in store against the bitter day of adversity. The loss of health and beauty at five-and-twenty may certainly be considered as a severe deprivation; and when to those evils lameness and occasionally severe suffering were added, it could only be a composed and elevated mind that could patiently support the severe conflict. Lady Powerscourt's ideas of pleasure had been adjusted to the limited model which fashion and fortune present to their narrow-minded votaries: what consolations could they provide to mitigate the horrors of a sick chamber, when the soul can only divert the present gloom by consolatory retrospects of its past conduct,

duct, or exhilarating anticipations of its future reward?

The passive spirit of interested dependance could scarcely support the wearisome petulance of the unhappy sufferer; and though sir William's philanthropy and habitual easiness made him exert more forbearance than generally belongs to the character of a husband, his gentleness sometimes proved unequal to the arduous conflict, and he felt a depressing inquietude which even the smiles of his little girl could not constantly divert. Though calamity renders the selfish mind still more callous to the sorrows of others, it stimulates benevolence to increased exertions. Lady Powerscourt was just relieved from one of her severest attacks, when her servant brought her a letter, which, after a slight perusal, she tossed contemptuously upon the table.

“ You seem disturbed, my dear,” said sir William, who happened to be present.

“ No wonder,” returned her ladyship; “ surely I have troubles enough of my own without being pestered with other people’s; but it is like the usual inconsistency of that thoughtless creature’s character.”

“ Whom do you mean ?” said the benevolent baronet, whose attention was roused at the idea of somebody being in distress.

“ I mean a very imprudent, but a very distant relation of mine, who flung herself away in marriage with lord Milford’s tutor, a little before I became lady Powerscourt; and she is now, as she might have foreseen, starving.”

“ Poor soul!” said sir William, reaching the letter; when finding by the perusal

refusal that it contained an appeal not only to the humanity but also to the honour of his lady, he fixed his eyes upon her with some degree of resentment, and exclaimed, "How came you to forget the poor woman? Why, you promised to do something for her husband!"

"She interprets general expressions too largely," resumed her ladyship; "I have done her a great many favours, and should have done her many more; but I found out that she was base, ungrateful, and not worthy of my notice."

"I am sorry for it with all my heart," replied Sir William; "she really writes like a sensible woman and a good Christian."

"Most people with whom I happen to disagree, are so in your opinion."

“ My dear, I am sorry to find you
“ disturbed ; your side is in pain again
“ I am afraid.”

“ It was a great deal better ; but
“ this woman’s impertinence brings on
“ all my old complaints.”

“ No, no, it won’t ; only keep your-
“ self quiet ; but pray, as I am quite a
“ stranger to the story, will you tell
“ me what this Mrs. Evans did, to
“ make you so very angry with her ?”

“ I told you, sir William, she fell
“ in love with a nobleman’s tutor, and
“ married him contrary to the advice
“ of all her friends. My father was
“ so incensed, that he declared if she
“ starved, he would never take the least
“ notice of her any more. But I was
“ very kind to her, and I sent her some
“ of my cast-off clothes when I mar-
“ ried, which, I suppose, encouraged
“ her to the unheard-of impudence
“ which

“ which she has been guilty of. Be-
“ cause she had been a sort of humble
“ friend when we were quite girls, she
“ had the effrontery to beg me to intro-
“ duce her husband to you; a fellow,
“ whose grandfather was nothing but a
“ travelling pedlar. Did you ever know
“ such audacity?”

Doubtless sir William would have felt very angry, if one of his own relations had contaminated the blood of Powerscourt by mixing it with the “ puddle of a pedlar,” and his resentment might have continued, till he discovered that he had it in his power to do the disgraced couple an act of service; but he thought it very ridiculous that a family of yesterday should in this instance pretend to the same delicacy with one that could be traced through untold centuries. Her ladyship, perceiving that the glow of resentment did not kindle

in his countenance so fast as she expected, added by way of climax, "And she sent the letter the very day when she knew I intended to receive company;—only think of endeavouring to occupy my attention at such a time."

"I think," said sir William emphatically, "that poor Mrs. Evans has been very unfortunate in applying when you were either too much engaged by pleasure or pain to attend her. But a promise is a promise, let people claim it when they will."

Lady Powerscourt's conscience here gave her a severe pang, and she confusedly answered, that she was sure she never meant to make any engagement; she durst swear that she never said so; at least, if she had, she had quite forgotten it.

"Very likely, very likely," replied the good man; "you never meant what
" you

“ you said, and so forgot all about it.
“ But you see she has remembered it, and
“ perhaps the world may think that it is
“ owing to me that you have not kept
“ your word, at least according to Mrs.
“ Evans’s account of the matter; how-
“ ever, I will try to clear up the mis-
“ take; and as she is your friend and
“ relation, they shall not be left de-
“ stitute.”

Sir William here rose and hurried out of the room, while lady Powerscourt loudly disclaimed the word *relation*, protesting Mrs. Evans could not be nearer than a second cousin, which she counted nothing at all.

CHAP. VI.

One self-approving hour whole years outweighs
Of stupid starers, and of loud huzza's.

POPE.

THE benevolence of sir William Powerfcourt was not confined within the narrow limits of relations and friends. It was not annihilated by the supposition of ingratitude, nor did its delicate sensibility shrink from the contact of human infirmity. It seemed a ray of that beneficence which causes the sun to rise upon the evil and the good, and the rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.

Nor was his idea of charity limited to the virtue of beneficence. Combining with his natural placability of temper, it produced the most cordial desire of being at peace with all mankind, and
made

made ready forgiveness almost outstep offence. He mounted his horse, and rode to Llangollen. On the road he meditated not on the faults of lady Powerscourt, for perhaps his imagination was afraid of venturing into such an ample field, but on the speediest means of alleviating the evils which her neglect had caused. Having heard an excellent character of the Evans's from some neighbouring gentlemen, he hastened to the cottage which sheltered modest worth. He found the wife engaged in the humble offices of domestic business, while the husband was rocking a little baby to sleep, and penning his Sunday discourse. However inelegant these occupations might be, sir William Powerscourt fancied that they both looked like very sensible people, and very good Christians.

The business of introduction was soon adjusted. Poverty had enfeebled but not extinguished the light of lettered science and polished manners which formerly irradiated the Evans's, and benevolence had entirely banished all ceremonious reserve from their respectable guest. He informed Mrs. Evans that he had a little girl as pretty as that which lay asleep in the cradle, but that her poor cousin lady Powercourt had scarcely enjoyed a day's health since it was born. At the mention of lady Powercourt a deep blush suffused Mrs. Evans's face, which, though it in reality proceeded from her anxiety to know the effect of a letter which she had secretly dispatched without her husband's consent, and contrary to his known opinion, sir William mistook for the glow of resentment, and very much disliking to see any body angry, he attempted a conciliatory

ciliatory explanation of his wife's conduct. His defence, indeed, amounted to little more than that, when people were much engaged either by pleasure or pain, they were very apt only to think of themselves: yet so powerful was his rhetoric, that the burning blushes on Mrs. Evans's cheek were soon quenched by a flood of tears; and though sir William was not absolutely unacquainted with tears of anger and disdain, he was convinced that these were of a milder quality. Mrs. Evans's grief was accompanied by the liveliest expressions of regret for lady Powerscourt's sufferings, and the most anxious wishes for her recovery. Sir William's eyes shone with kindred sensibility, he drew his chair closer to the fire, pressed her hand with the freedom of long intimacy, and cheerfully partook of the homely fare with which the hospitality

pitality of Mr. Evans had covered the little deal table.

He then took occasion to ask the particulars of their situation, and soon found that it was penurious in the extreme. Every resource had been tried, every friend applied to; but resources are not inexhaustible, and even friends do not always answer the calls of indigence with prompt relief. The favour which had been solicited of lady Powercourt was only her recommendation to a neighbouring clergyman, who allowed his curates the splendid stipend of fifty pounds per annum. This circumstance, unintentionally discovered, drew from sir William a deep sigh, and the exclamation of, "Well, I could not think that possible!"

The little girl now awoke, and the good baronet, who was become a great

con-

connoisseur in nursery transactions, seemed much attracted by its infantine charms. Finding that the difficulty of procuring sponsors had hitherto caused the christening ceremony to be delayed, he offered himself to undertake the office, adding a few words expressive of his sense of its solemn importance; and, having presented the mother with what he called his usual offering on such occasions, a bank-note of fifty pounds, he took leave of the enraptured pair with many kind assurances that they should soon hear of him again.

Providence seemed to assist sir William's generous resolution of making ample provision for oppressed merit. His domestic chaplain, on receiving the presentation to a valuable prebend, with noble moderation, vacated the living of Powerscourt, worth near four hundred pounds per annum. The character and
abilities

abilities of Mr. Evans seemed to point him out as an eligible successor; but it appeared to be an insuperable difficulty to gain lady Powerscourt's approbation of such a plan. Luckily, however, the lady was not quite inexorable. The humane concern which Mrs. Evans expressed for her illness had been placed in the strongest point of view, and if it had not wrought upon her gratitude, it at least, by recalling to her memory the obliging companion and the attentive friend of her younger years, persuaded lady Powerscourt to acknowledge, that in her present situation such a neighbour would be a desirable acquisition. Her apprehension of being disgraced by the recognition of her cousin was relieved by the fortunate communications of some morning visitors, who, having heard that sir William had publicly announced his intention of providing for Mr. Evans,

flew

flew to inform my lady that he was the "*charmingest* and most *delightfulest* preacher in the world; that Mrs. Evans too, though an excellent manager, was an amiable agreeable creature, quite the gentlewoman both in manner and appearance."

Sir William had purposed ushering in his intended disposal of the living of Powerscourt, by observations on the loss they should sustain by Mr. Jones's removal, and how highly desirable it was to have an agreeable neighbour at the rectory. He intended next to allude to Mr. Evans's reputed skill at back-gammon, and to inquire if his wife was not a very chatty conversable woman; but my lady stopped his exordium in the midst by one of those sweet surprisals in which the reader will perceive she abounded, and begged him as a favour to compliment her cousins
with

with the presentation,—a request which was granted with equal astonishment and joy.

Those who have been accustomed to dread the censures of their own hearts, and to suppose that an unwarrantable indulgence of the irritable passions must produce self-condemnation, will probably wonder that lady Powerscourt should wish for the society of a person whose presence must administer perpetual reproach to her conscious mind; but her moral creed was formed upon different principles. She thought it as much impossible for a person of fortune to behave ill to an inferior, as for a beauty to be capricious, or a wit satirical. Each of these characters had a privilege to be rude, tyrannical, and censorious; and as their faults required no atonement, every body was bound, upon the smallest change of behaviour on their parts, to lose

lose the remembrance of past storms in ravishing admiration of the present gentle breeze. Though endued herself with that trembling sensibility which bleeds at every pore, she doubted the existence of feeling in the subordinate orders of mankind; and though she had left her friend sinking in all the horrors of want, without stretching forth her hand to support her, she would have thought that friend the most ungrateful being in the world, if she had refused to dedicate her time to the task of endeavouring to alleviate her real or fancied sorrows.

Mrs. Evans certainly could feel, but she could also forgive. In her behaviour to lady Powerscourt she appeared to remember nothing but that she was the friend of her early youth, and the wife of her revered benefactor. "It is my duty," she used to say to her husband, when he kindly reproved her for
devoting

devoting so much time to the painful and unwholesome confinement of a sick chamber: "Consider," she continued, "how much we owe to sir William's bounty, and how much it befits us to try to diminish those troubles with which Providence thinks fit to prove the worthiest of human hearts." In this opinion Mr. Evans acquiesced, and only cautioned her not to injure her invaluable health.

Ten years successively rolled away without producing any remarkable change at Powerscourt. The Evans's continued to devote their chief attention to the duties which gratitude, sympathy, and pity required. Soothed by their society, enraptured by the attractive sweetness of his enchanting daughter, and sustained by the exalting consciousness of a life of usefulness and rectitude, sir William endured the hourly vexations

vexations by which the increased irritability of lady Powerscourt's temper contrived to cloud every enjoyment in which she could no longer partake. It seemed as if her example was intended as an awful warning to the pride of beauty and the pride of wealth. She lived to be disgusting and dependant, but she did not live to feel and acknowledge that her faults required the righteous chastisement.

Sir William's deportment at her death was marked by that decent propriety which characterized all his actions. He did not affect to be inconsolable, but he treated her memory with becoming respect. He submitted to the inconvenience of the little parlour and the summer apartments, because it would look like unkindness to his poor wife to restore things to their old state again. From the same motive he kept the
temples

temples and statues in good repair, though he either forgot their names or mistook their situations; and though he rather disliked dogs, he permitted an old black spaniel to be his constant companion, because it seemed to be the only thing to which she shewed any attachment. Yet bitter remembrance would sometimes extort from him, in the company of very particular friends, the confession, "that the poor woman " had very odd ways, but people who " are always ill are apt to be whimsical."

It was the general opinion of the country, that the good baronet would never more engage in a matrimonial connection, and this seemed to be the more extraordinary, as it was known he ardently wished to transmit his fortune and honours to a lineal descendant of his own name. Whether influenced

fluenced by delicacy arising from past happiness, or corroded by the recollection of past sorrows, it is certain he never appeared perfectly at ease when love or marriage was the topic of conversation; and though remarkable for uniform civility, the words, "fine feeling," and "acute sensibility," when used in their general import, always drew from him an emphatical "*Nonsense!*"

CHAP. VII.

—She was fair beyond your brightest bloom,
 (This Envy owns, since now her bloom is fled,)
 Fair as the forms that, wove in Fancy's loom,
 Float in light vision round the poet's head.

Whene'er with soft serenity she smil'd,
 Or caught the orient blush of quick surprize,
 How sweetly mutable, how brightly wild
 The liquid lustre darted from her eyes!

Each look, each motion, wak'd a new-born grace,
 That o'er her form its transient glory cast:
 Some lovely wonder soon usurp'd the place,
 Chas'd by a charm still lovelier than the last.

MASON.

My readers, whom I introduced in the beginning of my second Chapter to the marriage of Geraldine Powerscourt with the earl of Monteith, will perhaps complain of the intervening circumstances which retard my account of the events immediately subsequent to those auspicious

cious nuptials. They will probably blame me for beginning in the middle, and then going back to the first part; but I have not even yet quite unravelled the clue which led to that event, and must entreat their patience a little longer. Nothing is so imposing upon the generality of the world as an air of superior information and self-confidence; I shall therefore, instead of acknowledging myself to have been in an error, proceed to state, that this apparent inconsistency is the effect of design, and sanctioned by authority.

I can plead the example of many ingenious luminaries, who solely owe their reputation to a skilful generalship in the arrangement of their plans. Some have chosen to make a second volume take precedence of the first; others have objected to the formality of a beginning; and a third set have disdained the pe-

dantry of a conclusion. Several of the wits of the last age wrote pages on their own pre-existent state; and many writers of our times have penned volumes, which, if they have any meaning, tend to prove that it would have been better had they not existed at all. Some suppose the road to fame lies through the labyrinth of inexplicable paradoxes; while others, who publish one book to disprove what they have written in another, seem to think that, in order to advance, it is necessary to move backward like a crab. In vain does Criticism attempt to restrain these excursive flights:—the modern Pegasus is too restive to endure the rein, and too volatile to attend to the lash; and most writers have succeeded, who have attempted to found their reputation on the broad basis of singularity; for what greater proof of originality and spirit
can

can be given than by doing or saying something which surprises or terrifies every body?

But though these huge Leviathans may thus toss and sport as they please in the great deeps of literature, the lesser fry of authors must submit to some precautions, or endure the harder alternative of annihilation. Our morose task-masters not only impose upon us the stern laws of having a beginning, a middle, and an end; but they state the necessity of unity of design, and an attention to costume in age, place, and character. As I purposed, therefore, to treat of the effects arising from the marriage of lady Monteith, it became necessary for me to hurry into the midst of the scene, to bring forth Powerscourt-house in "high pomp jubilant;" and, like Homer, Virgil, and Milton, to adjust relative circumstances in an

episodical manner. In one respect I differ from these high authorities, by making myself the relator; but even here I have an ingenious fiction ready to obviate critical asperity. It is only supposing me the old Nestor of the fable, or the chorus of the scene, and I may tell as many long stories as I please, and moralise whenever I have an inclination, without offending against any of the statutes of Parnassus in that case made and provided. I will now introduce my Heroine upon the stage.

The connection between a lively sensible girl and a sickly petulant parent could be but slender; the concern, therefore, which Geraldine felt for lady Powerscourt's death was soon overcome. She had long considered Mrs. Evans as most truly fulfilling the maternal character; and she felt for her judicious, firm, but affectionate reproofs,
that

that filial deference which the eternal whine of her mother's complaining censures failed to inspire. Under the care of an experienced governess and celebrated masters, procured at unsparing expence, she rapidly acquired every female grace and suitable accomplishment; but it was to the instructions of Mrs. Evans, and to the tender friendship of her daughter Lucy, that her mind was indebted for its richest treasures.

At the age of seventeen she appeared an enchanting beauty; polite, sensible, accomplished, affable, and generous; the idol of her father, the delight of her friends and dependants, the envy of the neighbourhood, and the object to which every man of fortune in the county secretly aspired:

“ — She was indeed the glass
 “ Wherein the neighbouring youth did dress them-
 “ selves.”

Miss Powerscourt's example would sanction a small absurdity ; and her enchanting manners excited a herd of awkward imitators. They forgot, however, that it was her wit which supported her opinion, and her graceful beauty that gave elegance to the form of a bonnet, or adjusted the drapery of a robe.

Some fastidious observers, who, cold to the fascination of captivating loveliness, contemplate " the human form divine" with the same cautious discrimination with which they would analyze the merits of a picture, pointed out some shades in this portrait. They observed, that her vivacity at times approached to levity ; that, under the form of easy *nonchalance*, her eye was on the watch for adulation ; and that the perfections which nature had so liberally bestowed lost their most delicate attractions

attractions in the consciousness of possession.

To these observations Candour replied, that even levity was pardonable in youth and beauty, when it appeared to be the artless offspring of a happy innocent heart; that inexperience would apologize for the faults which proceeded from an exuberant flow of animal spirits, a strong desire to please, and a disposition uncommonly prone to the most generous disinterested confidence; that it was impossible for her to escape the knowledge of her own perfections, when every tongue was loud in her praise, and there were none to dispute her claim to pre-eminence; and that it was even amiable in her to wish to display those excellencies which seemed ever to communicate delight to others. I have stated the debates which were caused by the appearance and manners of Miss

Powerscourt, and shall only observe, that in point of numbers the applauders had it.

Many were the detractors and imitators which the fair Geraldine excited; but one young lady, who was neither her rival nor her copyist, loved her with unaffected tenderness. The character of Lucy Evans was perfectly her own; it was cast in nature's most artless mould, and finished by the unremitting attention of an intelligent mother and an exemplary father. Inferior to her friend in personal charms and expensive accomplishments, she was yet very pretty, very sensible, very amiable, and as well educated as the daughter of a country clergyman need wish to be. Early taught the difference between a young woman whose fortune must arise from the savings of four hundred pounds per annum, and the heiress of twice as many thousands, she

never

never made the indulgences of Miss Powerscourt the model for the regulation of her own enjoyments and desires. She had read much, she had thought more ; her leisure for study and reflection was greater than her friend's, and her mind imperceptibly acquired superior energy. Her knowledge of the world was confined to the manor-house and the rectory ; at the former she sometimes met mixed characters ; her sensibility made her strongly feel their improprieties, and her sincerity generally betrayed those emotions.

The ladies were friends in the strictest sense of the word ; but when I own that there was no other young person within several miles with whom Miss Powerscourt could properly form an intimacy, my readers will probably condemn me for ascribing the term friendship to an intercourse which rather proceeded from

chance and locality than from taste and selection, and will probably predict that it was very likely to be annihilated in the rude changes of the jostling world. The following pages will discover how far they are right; it shall suffice for me at present to affirm, that at the time I am treating of the attachment was mutual and sincere.

While the fair Geraldine bent over the harp with the grace of a Calliope and the execution of a Cecilia, Lucy sat quietly at her plain work in a corner of the room, and enjoyed the applause which her friend's masterly performance ever excited. But when Miss Powercourt's skill in music, drawing, embroidery, fillagree, and every other fashionable acquirement, had been displayed, Miss Evans could not wholly escape observation, at least if any persons in company were sufficiently liberal to turn

turn their eyes from the dazzling splendor of fortune to the mild lustre of modest independence. Though her observations did not proceed from a mouth exquisitely formed, nor were enforced by eyes of peculiar brilliancy, they bespoke a correct intelligent mind, and were accompanied by an arch *naïveté*, or an ingenuous earnestness, which seemed at once to develop the speaker's artless amiable character. Exulting at the attention which her Lucy's remarks obtained, Miss Powerscourt ever delighted to lead the conversation to topics on which she knew her to excel; and when the party was large, modest diffidence was often charmed out of its intended silence by the affectionate artifices of the mistress of the feast.

Without attributing too much to the allurements of wealth, it may readily be believed, that Miss Powerscourt's hand

was an object of general contention. After having, in the space of two years, refused more unexceptionable offers than the most invincible heroine of modern romance can boast, she was introduced to the earl of Monteith at Chester race-ball, and at her chaperon's request accepted him for a partner. Their similitude in graceful beauty, age, fortune, and connections, pointed them out to the whole company as a most suitable match; and a little policy was admitted, that the peerless pair might not be separated the whole evening. The next morning his lordship appeared early upon the course, where dismounting without once discussing the merits of the race-horses, or attending to the weighing of the riders, he took his seat in the stand next to Miss Powercourt, and during the whole morning seemed to forget that he had several thousands depending

upon the issue of the course. In the evening he was again at the ball, again requested the hand of his former partner, and, without once spraining his ankle or complaining of insufferable heat, danced till three o'clock the next morning. Every body was now sure that he was captivated, and the whole county were on the tiptoe of expectation.

On the very day of her return to Powerscourt, Geraldine set out in search of her Lucy, and entreated that she would come and spend a little time with her at the manor. It was impossible for Miss Evans to avoid observing, that her friend's account of the ball, the dresses, and the manners of the company, was very much embarrassed, and destitute of its usual vivacity. On entering the dressing-room Geraldine locked the door, and, throwing her arms around her Lucy's neck, told her she had a secret to divulge

vulge which was of the greatest importance. On receiving a promise of inviolable secrecy, Miss Powerscourt endeavoured to explain ; but after several ineffectual attempts to begin the discovery, she saw some company coming over the lawn, and, promising her friend to be more explicit at another time, she unlocked the door and hastened to receive her guests.

It was more than a week before Miss Evans could find leisure from her domestic occupations to visit Powerscourt-house, in order that she might receive the sacred trust. She now found her friend's lively spirits still more subdued ; she was absent, frequently sighed, played with her mother's picture, which hung suspended by a pearl chain on her bosom, sketched figures upon the table with her netting needle, and, though unusually affectionate in her expressions, seemed

seemed less inclined to confide the story of her troubles than at their former interview. Neither Miss Evans's disposition nor education were in the least romantic; she could only perceive that her friend had met with some great vexation, and she was too delicate to endeavour to pierce the veil which concealed those sorrows; she therefore contented herself with secretly wishing the painful anxiety speedily removed.

But, though Miss Evans was thus short-sighted, my readers have probably discovered enough of the disorder to acquit me of introducing extraneous matter, though I should instantly revert to lord Monteith. On dancing with Miss Powerscourt the first night, he publicly declared that she was the finest girl he had ever seen: the conversation in the stand convinced him that she was uncommonly clever; and at the inter-
view

view the second evening she appeared with such captivating grace, that he loudly protested she was the most elegant woman in the world; and that Geraldine Powerscourt was almost enough to induce any man to submit to the yoke of marriage. The friends to whom he uttered these rapturous exclamations reported them to their mothers and sisters, who repeated them to their acquaintance; but the rough masculine sentiment, when filtered through the organs of female delicacy, spoke in a much softer and more insinuating tone. All the ladies protested that the earl of Monteith was deeply enamoured with Miss Powerscourt; that he thought her the divinest creature that ever existed; that he was dying for an opportunity of throwing himself at her feet; and that his whole earthly happiness depended upon her. This high-flown language, repeated

peated by every visitor, certainly vibrated on the ear of the fair Geraldine with a pleasing sound. She considered the absurdity of the expression to be entirely chargeable on the relater, but that the sentiment was undoubtedly his lordship's. She only answered by the words "How ridiculous! How infinitely absurd!" but she blushed and smiled while she reprov'd, and made no effort to change the conversation to a more *sensible* subject. Every body observed, that she sigh'd frequently, talked less, and could remember none but plaintive tunes. The lovely pair were therefore certainly mutually smitten; and it was earnestly hoped that sir William would not waywardly attempt to interdict their union.

A month elapsed, yet the enamoured swain had neither flung himself at the feet of his dulcinea, nor taken any other step to secure the prize upon which his
whole

whole earthly happiness depended. This delay, though it cost the lady a little chagrin, was yet upon the whole beneficial to his lordship's cause. She had time to reflect upon all he had said, and all he had looked at their former interviews; and though her own knowledge of his character was limited to the observation of uncommon elegance of figure and a gentlemanlike address, the whole world (I mean that part of it with which Miss Powerscourt was acquainted) protested that he was a most amiable and accomplished nobleman. These vague indefinite terms may be compared to the outline which travellers frequently present of newly-discovered countries, leaving space for succeeding adventurers to embellish the chart by placing rivers, bays, and mountains where they suppose they may be found. Miss Powerscourt exercised all her inventive powers to

to fill up the sketch of lord Monteith's character. She marshalled all the virtues and agreeable qualities, and placed them in the properest stations. Wit was supported by taste and learning, generosity was circumscribed by prudence, and heroism was tempered by the most melting sensibility. In fine, the portrait was enchanting, but the likeness was ideal; the fair designer however, like Pygmalion, became deeply enamoured with the creature of her own imagination.

C H A P. VIII.

O, ten times faster Venus' pigeons fly
 To seal love's bonds new made, than they are wont
 To keep obliged faith unforfeited.——
 O Love, be moderate, allay thy ecstacy;
 In measure rain thy joy, scant this excess:
 I feel too much thy blessing, make it less,
 For fear I surfeit!

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD MONTEITH was quite a Benedict, and had determined not to encumber himself with a wife, unless he found it impossible to be happy without one. He hastened from the rural shade and moping solitude, which, if not the mother, is certainly the nurse of Love. He plunged into the dissipation of London, visited the court, the opera, the pantheon masquerades; but the lovely form of the Cambrian enchantress pursued him to every retreat. Nay, even at the

the gaming-table, when hundreds were depending upon the odd trick, she rose to his view in all the splendor of her ball-room ornaments; bending her waving plumes, she gently struck him with her magic fan, and, begging him to be attentive to the delightful dance which was just begun, made him lose the game.

If my limited observation of the male character may be trusted, the difference of soul in the two sexes is no where more plainly seen than in their manner of encountering vexation. A lady in lord Monteith's circumstances, upon finding her heart irrecoverably lost, would have devoted her time to woods and groves, and, only breathing her passion to some dear confidante, would have found a luxurious indulgence in complaining of her ruthless stars; but his lordship, when he discovered that even
cards

cards and dice could no longer occupy his mind, ordered post-horses, and in less than forty-eight hours arrived at the seat of his friend lord W. in Caernarvonshire, to consult on the properest method of making proposals to the lady who had caused such cruel devastation.

It was agreed that a very gallant address to Miss Powerscourt should be inclosed in a respectful letter to sir William; and, to give the proceedings more weight, lord W. offered to be courier. He found the father and daughter tête-à-tête; the latter rose on his announcing particular business; but on his adding, with a significant look, that it concerned lord Monteith, she seemed rather to loiter in her attempt to leave the room. "Stay, my dear love, if you like it better," said sir William, "for I have no secrets from you." The permission was very agreeable; she walked to the
opposite

opposite window, and seemed only occupied in playing with her favourite Italian greyhound, while her father was circumspectly examining the seal of the packet, and decyphering the armorial honours of the Macdonalds.

“ Here is a letter too for you, Geraldine,” said sir William. She turned to receive it ; but encountering the eyes of lord W. the liveliest confusion was imprinted on her countenance. She would have given the world to escape the explanation, which, but a moment before, she was impatient to hear. Luckily a servant announced the arrival of Miss Evans, and she hastened to receive her friend, while lord W. as he attended her to the door, politely whispered that her triumph was complete, and entreated her to be as merciful as she was invincible.

Sir

Sir William had by this time perused his letter, and sunk into a profound reverie, from which he was roused by the eulogium which lord W. pronounced on the rank, talents, fortune, and connexions of his noble friend, the warmth of his attachment, and the uncommon excellencies of Miss Powerscourt.

Though sir William listened with the most delighted attention to the panegyric on his daughter, he discovered great uneasiness during the description of lord Monteith's passion ; and as soon as lord W. had ended his harangue, he expressed his hopes that the account was not quite true. His noble guest took fire at the imputation of exaggeration, and confirmed every thing he had before asserted with violent protestations.

" Then I beg your lordship's pardon," said sir William ; " and I do assure you, that I had not the smallest
" design

“ design of offending ; for, I dare say,
 “ you never told me more than what
 “ you thought was truth ; and very pos-
 “ sibly lord Monteith may think so too.
 “ Young men and women are apt to
 “ suppose themselves in love, and I
 “ hope it is no more in the present case ;
 “ for I should be very sorry to have
 “ my girl make a worthy gentleman
 “ miserable.”

Lord W. pleaded that his noble friend
 was certainly one of the first matches in
 the kingdom.

“ Undoubtedly,” replied sir William ;
 “ and yet, no disparagement to the Mac-
 “ donalds, the Powerscourts are quite
 “ as ancient and respectable. But, to tell
 “ you the truth, I am not very fond of
 “ lords, at least not for sons-in-law. Ge-
 “ raldine will have enough if her husband
 “ has not a shilling, and I would rather
 “ she should bestow herself upon some
 VOL. I. C “ worthy

“worthy man who would keep up my
“family, than sink my name and fortune
“in that of any peer in the three king-
“doms.”

Lord W. observed, that by a suitable arrangement in the marriage-writings the family name might be preserved.

Sir William rather fretted at these expedients. “I have told you, my
“lord,” said he, “that I think very well
“of the Macdonalds; it is an antient
“name, and an honourable family; it
“has given birth to a great many true
“lovers of their country; but I hope
“lord Monteith will not be offended
“with me, if I say that I prefer my own.
“In short, my lord, there is a young man
“whom I think of for Geraldine; and
“a great blessing, let me tell you, she
“will be to him.”

Lord W. recollected a young man of
the name of Powerscourt, whose educa-
tion

tion had been defrayed at fir William's expence, and who occasionally visited at the manor; but as he was known to be entirely dependent upon his patron's bounty, no one supposed him the destined husband for the heiress of Powercourt. His lordship's astonishment was so great that he could not help asking, whether the lady assented to this extraordinary disposal of charms which might add honour to a dukedom.

"I have not yet told her my plans," said fir William; "she is very young at present, and I would not cut short her happiest days. She is so attached to me, that I am sure it will be almost death for her to leave me; but as she is my only child, I must marry her to keep up my family. I assure your lordship, she is a very sensible girl, and will have no notion about duke-

G 2

"doms,

“ doms, unless other people put it in
“ her head.”

Lord W. asked if the happy youth
knew his envied destination.

Sir William did not like to be thus
catechised; he, however, answered in
the negative. “ I don’t think it right,”
said he, “ to have young men made
“ vain. He is a modest good lad now,
“ and will enjoy his fortune better, and
“ know how to do more good with it,
“ for having been without one when he
“ was young. I assure you, my lord,
“ you are the first person to whom I ever
“ mentioned my plan, though I formed
“ it as soon as my wife died, never in-
“ tending to marry again. It is out of
“ respect to lord Monteith that I men-
“ tion it, because I would not have him
“ think that I refuse his addresses in an
“ uncivil manner. But had I not better
“ write

“ write a few lines to his lordship, as
“ he was so polite as to write to me ?”

Lord W. promised to be a faithful reporter of what had passed, and they separated mutually dissatisfied, lord W. conceiving sir William to be the most extraordinary old quiz he ever conversed with ; and sir William wishing the flashy young men would let his daughter alone, being certain that she was perfectly happy if they would not torment her.

While this scene passed in the breakfast-parlour, Geraldine was perusing her letter in the dressing-room, commenting on its passionate but respectful contents, and owning to her dear Lucy that it was impossible to deny lord Monteth's merits. She could now repeat all the adventures of Chester races ; her account was lively and interesting, yet sufficiently sentimental to explain to Miss Evans the reason of her absence and her

sighs. She waited her father's summons with impatience, and flew to dinner with so light a foot as would scarcely have pressed down

“The goffamer

“That idles in the summer's noon-tide air :”

but it was observable, that she returned with

“Even step and musing gait,

“Sober, stedfast, and demure.”

I need not account in diffuse terms for the change. Sir William had informed her of his absolute rejection of lord Monteith, in a manner which evidently proved that he expected she would be as well satisfied with his conduct in this particular, as she had been in every preceding instance, it never occurring to sir William that she could be at all interested in the addresses of a stranger.

Though Miss Powerscourt had certainly acted with girlish precipitancy in attaching

attaching herself to the idol of her own imagination; and though, with the common philosophy of nineteen, she supposed nothing so irretrievable as a wandering heart, she really was what sir William esteemed her to be, a very amiable and very sensible girl. She not only loved her father's person, but she also venerated his character. The emphasis that he laid on the word *stranger* induced her to reflect on the hazard of bestowing her hand upon a person with whom she was so slightly acquainted; and though she continued to believe that lord Monteith possessed all the real virtues of which she had conjured up the resemblance, yet she thought there would be no impropriety in letting the latent excellencies expand. In fine, she was too respectful as a daughter to establish an open opposition to her father's intentions, and too delicate as a female to think of

encouraging an address which wanted the solemn sanction of paternal approbation. If lord Monteith's passion was sincere, it would not be repressed by difficulties; and if it stood the trial, she knew the warmth of sir William's affection to her too well to fear his final rejection, when he should know that her happiness depended upon his assent.

If my readers think these resolutions too magnanimous to correspond with the character of a young lady accustomed even to that solicitous indulgence which prevents our wishes, who never viewed the world but on its brightest side, and who never saw

“ Hard unkindness' alter'd eye

“ Mock the tear it forc'd to flow;”

let it be remembered, that she had in Mrs. Evans a friend of a superior cast to what most heiresses can ever hope to possess; a friend who, having no
sinister

sinister views, had no occasion for servility or flattery;—a friend, who to an exalted turn of mind united the courage to enforce unpleasant truths, and generosity to overlook casual errors.

We have seen that gratitude to sir William reconciled Mrs. Evans to the painful task of attending lady Powerscourt during her long illness. When death terminated what she conceived to be her duty in that particular, she considered the situation of his daughter. Young, amiable, idolized, possessed of superior beauty and uncommon vivacity, by what more noble method could she evince her gratitude to the father, than by showing the unwary girl the shoals and quicksands which abound in the voyage of life?

Mrs. Evans's early knowledge of what is called the great world convinced her, that though refinement may interpose

its flimsy veil, the unamiable passions prevail in the higher circles as much as in the cottage; and that the pilgrim who wishes to pursue a safe course must unite the serpent with the dove. While, therefore, she strongly recommended to Miss Powerscourt the extirpation, not the concealment, of every ungenerous, violent, and selfish principle, as the happiest means of ensuring internal peace, she taught her to apprehend external danger from the violence and selfishness of others, however concealed by the fair appearance of polished manners, or even by professions of attachment. But, above all, she strongly imprinted on her pupil's mind a veneration for her father's character. She not only pointed out his active benevolence, patient gentleness, and firm integrity, but led her to consider the general propriety of his opinions upon any subject with which he

he was thoroughly acquainted; and though his recluse habits had cast an air of singularity over his natural good sense, yet his plain firm stile of thinking was not only better but wiser than that flexible judgment which bends, contracts, or expands, as the world, that is, as caprice determines. Nothing could be more judicious than these instructions. Miss Powerscourt's parts were lively and brilliant, quick in discovering the ridiculous, and powerful in exposing it. Though virtue, benevolence, and fond indulgence, must have obtained the warm affection of her grateful heart, her respect for such a father could only be founded on the persuasion which she had imbibed in her early youth of the natural superiority of his uncultivated understanding.

The consciousness of yielding to a weakness which Mrs. Evans would dis-

approve, had kept her from informing Lucy of the state of her heart prior to lord Monteith's declaration, and the same sentiment forbade her discovering any strong uneasiness at her father's rejection of his addresses. In relating the affair she only observed with a suppressed sigh, that she thought his lordship infinitely the most amiable and deserving of any of her suitors; but since her father disapproved the connexion, she should acquiesce in his decision, and heartily wish the earl happy with some other lady: in which wish, however, it may be questioned whether she did not make a little use of the long bow.

The enamoured earl was not at this time in so quiescent a state. He was quite in a humour for

“Moving accidents by flood and field;”

Or,

“For hair breadth 'scapes in th' imminent
“deadly breach.”

One

One time he resolved to storm the castle and free the lady from durance; at another time decided to stretch his rival in the bloody dust. The probability of the fair one's being offended by the first project soon made him abandon that; and there seemed so much cruelty in killing a man who did not even know that he was an impediment to his happiness, that his lordship's cooler judgment pronounced that the latter would be too sanguinary. After considering all the plans which antient and modern romance supplies, the old scheme of Jupiter and the shower of gold was preferred. But it was not to Danaë that the Caledonian Jupiter descended in that form; it was to Danaë's waiting maid.

The very evening after this phenomenon had taken place, Miss Powerscourt saw a letter upon her dressing-table, superscribed in characters which she perfectly

perfectly recollected. The Cambrian Abigail was not an adept in her profession; for on being questioned how it came there, she neither affirmed that she saw a Cupid fly in with it at the window, nor even hinted that it might be conveyed there by fairies, or rise out of the table by the power of enchantment. She neither invoked goblin nor witch, but simply owned that lord Monteith begged her to deliver it, and she thought there could be no harm in complying with the request of such an agreeable gentleman.

“If you do not know your duty to
“my father, Bridget, I know mine:
“return it immediately to his lord-
“ship; but stay; I think I will add a
“few words.”

Mrs. Bridget blessed her goodness,
and began an harangue on his lordship's
virtues,

virtues, which her mistress silenced with a look, and she retired.

The opener of Pandora's box was a gentleman. Let the gentlemen therefore behold one of the sex whom they brand with the stigma of curiosity, sitting with a Pandora's box sealed before her, yet forbearing to lift the interdicted lid. She wrote a few lines which expressed her abhorrence of a clandestine correspondence, without intimating perpetual enmity against the correspondent, and, inclosing his lordship's letter, rung her bell, and ordered it to be delivered by the very first opportunity. She refused Mrs. Bridget's attendance that evening, and betook herself to the repose which conscious rectitude and self-possession can alone enjoy.

CHAP. IX.

———A prudent father,
By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,
Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,
Who, with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

THOMSON.

LORD MONTEITH and his friend were forced to project fresh measures; for Mrs. Bridget was so unwilling to offend her dear generous young lady, that she refused to appear any more upon the stage, and yet her gratitude to the dear generous young gentleman induced her to consent still to take a part behind the scenes. She suggested that her lady would soon pay a visit to a neighbouring family; that she would go on horseback, only accompanied by Mr. John the groom; that the road lay through a neigh-

neighbouring coppice, but that lord W. as well as sir William had keys of the ridings; and she concluded with observing significantly, that Mr. John was a very well-behaved man, no listener, and too *discreet* to say any thing.

The excursion was undertaken at the appointed time; but the instant Miss Powerscourt entered the wood, she saw a gentleman on horseback approaching, whom, in another instant, she knew to be lord Monteith. Her first intention was to turn back, but she was prevented by John's having dropped the key in the long grass, just as he had locked the gate. Anger was useless, indeed unreasonable; for the poor man was endeavouring to repair his carelessness by looking for it very anxiously. Though she could not but suspect that the rencontre was concerted, she had sufficient confidence in her own dignity to overcome

overcome her first agitation. Retreat was impossible, and she advanced slowly to the dreaded interview.

On the gentleman's side there was expressed an infinitude of love, admiration, and despair, blended with some degree of resentful sensibility at the idea of being compelled privately to solicit a blessing to which he had thought himself entitled publicly to aspire. On the lady's there appeared a just sense of female decorum, and a steady resolution to repress any acrimonious observations on her father's conduct. But the most interesting part of the conversation took place after lord Monteith had explained sir William's reasons for rejecting his addresses, and asked her if she would accept the lover he designed to propose.

"Assuredly I will not," was her answer. "Should my father ever ex-
" press

“press such intentions to me, I must
“be as firm in refusing my hand where
“I cannot bestow my heart, as I now
“am in rejecting your addresses while
“he disapproves of them.”

“Most admirable of all human crea-
“tures!” exclaimed Monteith, “I will
“patiently commit my destiny to the
“care of a lady whose exalted ideas in-
“crease my esteem for her at every in-
“terview; yet permit me to add one
“more inquiry. Might I venture, ma-
“dam, to hope, should I have been too
“presumptuous in hoping, that if I had
“been honoured by sir William’s ap-
“probation, I should not have encoun-
“tered the terrors of your refusal?”

Miss Powerscourt’s reply was con-
fused and inarticulate; yet the deep crim-
son which flushed her half-averted face,
and the softness of her accent, did not
reduce him to despair. She perceived
it

it did not; and as soon as she had recollected herself, she added, " I know the
" goodness of my father's heart; I know
" his unbounded affection for me; and I
" am confident that he will persist in no
" plan that would make me miserable.
" But let me entreat you, my lord, not
" to pursue a method of addressing me
" which must either make me mean
" in my own eyes, or diminish my
" respect for your character." His
lordship bowed, and, protesting inviolable obedience and unaltered love, rode off just at the instant that John found the key which enabled Miss Powerfcourt to pursue her expedition. Her conduct in this interview did not lessen her in her lover's affections, for he vowed to lord W. that she was an angel in a human form, and that he was determined either to die or obtain her.

Nor

Nor did the Evans's, to whom Miss Powerscourt impartially related this incident and that of the letter, feel any diminution of the love and esteem which the many amiable qualities of their charming young friend had long excited. On the contrary, Mrs. Evans bestowed warm encomiums on the marked propriety of her conduct, and Lucy's eyes shone with that humid lustre which the praises of her dear Geraldine always called forth. Sir William's scheme for the intended disposal of his daughter's hand excited general surprise, mingled with some share of disapprobation; and, though uniform respect for his character prevented Mrs. Evans from expressing any doubt of the propriety or practicability of the project, the heartless open-hearted Lucy was so strongly persuaded of its impropriety, that the moment Miss Powerscourt retired, she could not avoid reprobating

reprobating the absurdity of allowing her friend so little influence in an affair so infinitely momentous to her own happiness.

“It is certainly wrong,” replied Mrs. Evans, “and may be added to the
 “instances I have frequently repeated
 “to convince you of the necessity of
 “conforming a little to the notions of
 “other people; for I have often observed, my dear girl, that you have
 “more tenacity of opinion than one generally meets with in a young woman
 “of nineteen. Do not suffer singularity to creep upon you; for though
 “it only now appears in wearing your
 “hair smooth, while all your acquaintance have theirs curled, or in expressing your dislike to music when all
 “the world is musical, it may twenty
 “or thirty years hence induce you to
 “lay more absurd schemes for the
 “marriage

“marriage of my grandchildren than
“even sir William’s so much reprobated
“plan.”

Lucy replied laughing, “I will put
“my hair in rollers this very evening,
“which will, I trust, remove your ap-
“prehensions respecting the preposter-
“ous matches of your grandchildren.”

“If you, my dear,” continued Mrs.
Evans, “recollect the circumstances
“of sir William’s life, and analyze his
“character, his present design will ap-
“pear the natural result of both. The
“virtues which spread prosperity and
“joy all around him are not the result
“of those refined feelings, those elegant
“susceptibilities, which usurp the place
“of solid virtues in the estimation of
“too many. They are the effect of
“reflection, of principle, of christian
“principle, my dear, that firmest found-
“ation for all that is truly excellent

“in

“ in man. But though his idea, that
“ the gifts of fortune are only an ac-
“ countable stewardship, makes him
“ uniformly and perseveringly upright
“ and generous, it does not supply those
“ nicer touches of the heart which na-
“ ture never originally bestowed. Ex-
“ clusive of what he feels for Geral-
“ dine, I question whether his heart
“ ever acknowledged any sentiment live-
“ lier than universal benevolence.”

“ How came he to marry then ?” in-
quired Lucy. The air of *naïveté*
with which she spoke would have di-
verted Mrs. Evans at another time ; but
when applied to the present subject it
recalled painful sensations. “ It was not
“ a love-match,” said she, after a long
pause ; “ and I fear lady Powerscourt
“ did not study to excite those senti-
“ ments of esteem and attachment in
“ sir William’s mind, which her en-
“ gaging

“ gaging attentions would have in-
“ spired. Though I believe he never
“ felt a stronger tie than what arose
“ from habit and compassion, his na-
“ tural goodness made him behave to
“ her, during the trial of a long sick-
“ ness, with so much tenderness, that
“ he was universally accounted a most
“ excellent husband. You know, Lucy,
“ he is not apt to make observations on
“ people or incidents which do not
“ immediately affect himself. The world
“ slides by unnoticed, if it do not el-
“ bow him; and though this may con-
“ duce to the tranquillity of his mind,
“ it prevents him from enlarging his
“ stock of information. Can you,
“ however, wonder, from what he has
“ felt and from what he has observed,
“ that he should suppose mutual attach-
“ ment unnecessary in a union between
“ two worthy people? and you will al-

“ low Miss Powerscourt and her cousin
“ answer that description.”

“ Most certainly they have the best
“ hearts in the world ; but is not lord
“ Monteith too a most worthy charac-
“ ter, and in point of rank and for-
“ tune a more desirable match ?”

“ Fortune, my dear, though in most
“ marriages a very necessary ingredient,
“ is of little consequence in the disposal
“ of Miss Powerscourt ; for her here-
“ ditary affluence is so great, that she
“ may possess every indulgence she can
“ wish for, without the necessity of
“ her husband’s adding any thing to
“ the paternal stock. I am not one of
“ those who slight the advantages of
“ rank ; I allow it to be desirable ; but
“ if you balance against it the apparent
“ justice of bestowing a rich heiress on
“ her father’s nearest male relation,
“ who is educated in the same princi-
“ ples,

“ ples, and will reside upon the same
“ spot where his ancestors have flour-
“ rished, who will most probably con-
“ tinue to diffuse the same noble bene-
“ volence and patriarchal hospitality; I
“ protest, when I think of these advan-
“ tages, I can condemn nothing but sir
“ William’s characteristical indifference
“ to the state of his daughter’s affec-
“ tions. But I observe, Lucy, that of
“ late you always seem uneasy and silent
“ when we talk of Henry Powerscourt;
“ are not you and your old friend and
“ playfellow upon as good terms as
“ usual?”

“ Yes, quite so.”

“ Then should you not rejoice at the
“ prospect of his good fortune?”

“ So I do; but poor lord Monteith—
“ I cannot help just now thinking of
“ him. I am sorry at my very heart

“ that he should be left unhappy, he is
“ so uncommonly amiable.”

“ Pray,” said Mrs. Evans, “ how
“ came you to know that he is so un-
“ commonly amiable and excellent?”
Miss Evans confessed that her informant
was Geraldine.

“ Ah poor Geraldine!” said Mrs.
Evans, “ the eye I see has outstepped
“ the judgment; I hope it has not
“ misled it. What very amiable qua-
“ lities could she discover in a ball-
“ room? Does the indirect mode of his
“ pursuing your friend, since her fa-
“ ther’s rejection, argue any exalted
“ excellence?”

“ No,” said Lucy, “ indeed it does
“ not; but do, my dear mother, make
“ allowances for his very strong attach-
“ ment. I am afraid too my sweet
“ friend’s heart is irrevocably his, and
“ ought she to marry Henry Powerf-
“ court,

“ court, all worthy and good as he is,
 “ while her affections are another’s ?”

“ Your mother’s conduct,” replied
 Mrs. Evans, “ has shewn her decided
 “ opinion upon such a question, nor
 “ has she ever found reason to regret
 “ the preference which has made her
 “ the wife of the worthiest of men.
 “ Yet, if in the present conflict of Miss
 “ Powerscourt’s passions I could hope
 “ that my warning voice might be heard,
 “ I would entreat her to consider, whe-
 “ ther, since her attachment is not the
 “ result of long acquaintance and im-
 “ partial observation, but the transient
 “ start of sudden preference, it be not
 “ at least possible that her father’s plan
 “ for her happiness may be the most eli-
 “ gible ? She can never now have an
 “ opportunity of knowing lord Mon-
 “ teith’s real disposition previous to the
 “ marriage ceremony. The cautious

“ lover will disclose nothing which is
“ disagreeable, where he studies to re-
“ commend himself to favour ; and what
“ can she learn from the vague or per-
“ haps interested communications of
“ others ? Charge her then, my dear
“ Lucy, in your moments of endear-
“ ment and privacy ; if your Geraldine’s
“ happiness be dear to you, charge her
“ to reflect on Henry’s known virtues,
“ his modest diffidence, ingenuous gra-
“ titude, and gentle, yet generous dis-
“ position. Ask her, if these are not
“ the qualities which must insure hap-
“ piness, and warn her not to mistake
“ a transient liking for an insurmount-
“ able attachment.”

Miss Evans burst into tears at her mother’s pathetic injunction, and promised obedience.

CHAP. X.

True dignity is his, whose tranquil mind
Virtue has rais'd above the things below ;
Who, every hope and fear to heaven resign'd,
Shrinks not, though Fortune aim her deadliest
blow. BEATTIE.

WHILE Youth with democratic violence pulls down Reason from her sovereign seat, and commits the helm to a rebel rout of passions ; Age, finding these riotous principles quiet and manageable in his own particular territories, supposes it easy for others to keep them in equal subjection, and affirms that the absolute unlimited monarchy of the ci-devant princess is not only the best mode of government, but actually the most feasible. It is not wonderful that Youth should deny the power of those restrictive principles which time and experi-

ence gradually introduce ; but certainly Age might remember the sentiments that it once felt.

The above observation, though profoundly true in general, is, I confess, irrelevant to the case before us ; for sir William Powerscourt had exactly the same opinion of love at the time I am treating of, as he had forty years before ; and Mrs. Evans was of so singular a taste, and had so thorough a contempt for a “ set of features and complexion,” that, like Desdemona, she saw her husband’s “ features in his mind ;” for when she selected Mr. Evans, who had no personal graces to boast of, she not only encountered embarrassed circumstances, but displeased her relations by rejecting a rich and handsome, but abandoned admirer.

A few days after the events related in my preceding Chapter had taken place,

place, sir William's bailiff begged his Honor's leave to tell him something that made him unhappy. It was, that he had twice seen a very fine gentleman whispering with Mrs. Bridget in *Ellis's* temple in the dark hour. The groom, he added, seemed to know something about it, for he laughed, and said Bridget had got a London sweetheart; but Roger somehow thought, though he knew that second-handed gentlemen in London dressed as fine as their masters, that this looked to be another guise kind of body. Sir William thanked Roger for his fidelity, shook his head, and observed that the world grew worse and worse every hour; to which observation Roger, who was of the same age with his master, cordially agreed.

Previous to these communications of faithful Roger, sir William had felt a considerable share of uneasiness. He

recollected that lady Powerscourt was very fond of relating long narratives of resistless beauties, who, by their unrelenting cruelty, had compelled their desperate lovers to carry them off in chariots and six, surrounded by armed footmen, maugre all their tears and cries; and though sir William had always considered these tales to be entitled to an equal degree of credibility with those of Mother Goose, his anxiety for Geraldine reminded him, that if lord Monteith had ever happened to hear any of these stories, they might have put something in his head which he would not otherwise have thought of. He determined therefore to inform Henry Powerscourt of his designs in his favour, and to consign his daughter to a husband's protection some years sooner than he had intended.

That

That young gentleman passed the college vacations at Powerscourt, and excited the esteem of every intelligent observer by his ingenuous diffidence, unaffected gentleness, and a thousand unequivocal proofs of a generous, grateful heart. His countenance was open, and his features agreeable, though they had no pretensions to beauty; his figure was naturally good, but he seemed quite at a loss how to manage it to the best advantage. He was said to possess very respectable literary talents, but the perpetual raillery of the lively Geraldine against pedants made him profoundly silent upon topics which he was best qualified to discuss. Of the world he was totally ignorant; and he seemed, like his respectable kinsman, to be not very anxious to be initiated into its mysteries. Afraid of being absurd, he never ventured to trifle; ignorant of

the small talk of the day, too studious and retired during his college residence to enrich his mind with alma-mater anecdote, or to learn the art of practical joking; conscious of his dependant situation; solicitous to avoid intrusion; and ever fearful of offending; he certainly appeared with a reserve and gravity unusual at his age; and he might in a mixed company justify Geraldine's observations, that he looked like perpetual president of the club of the humdrums.

Miss Powerscourt's vivacity found continual employment during her cousin's visits in what she called teaching him the graces, and rubbing off college rust. But though an exuberant flow of youthful spirits made her sometimes pursue these topics further than her good nature would have permitted, had she known that it gave pain to the object
of

of her raillery, she felt for him the tenderness of a sister, and treated him with the confidence of a friend. Her heart was truly generous: I do not speak of that light, transient, and sometimes affected disregard for money which young people, who have never experienced its utility, often carelessly display; but of that real liberality which could circumscribe its own desires to increase the comforts of those around it. Far therefore from regretting the sums which sir William expended in Henry's education and support, or viewing the progress which he made in the good baronet's affections with envy or jealousy, she continually urged him immediately to bestow upon the valuable oddity, as she styled him, that independence which his noble mind richly deserved. "I even tell him," she would say to her Lucy, "that in so doing he will make
" me

“me happier; for I cannot help
“feeling that I was thrown in the way
“most unseasonably to mar that dear
“fellow’s expectations. But for me,
“you know, Lucy, he would have been
“heir to all my father’s princely for-
“tune.”

Such solicitude for Henry’s interest had convinced sir William that his scheme was in the most prosperous way; and when, deeming the golden harvest of hope to be fully ripe, he informed his daughter with a significant smile that he had sent for her cousin to Powerscourt upon business in which she was materially concerned, he certainly thought that he was communicating welcome intelligence. Far different were the agonized feelings of Geraldine, feelings which her anxiety to save her elated father from the pangs of sudden disappointment could scarcely restrain. She
flew

flew to Lucy, and, throwing herself into her arms, conjured her by all their infantine tenderness, if she ever loved, ever pitied her, to do something to save her from the dreadful alternative of a detested marriage, or offending an almost adored father.

Lucy mingled her tears with Geraldine's with more than the common sensibility of friendship. She could recollect nothing but her mother's solemn adjuration, and she repeated her arguments with fidelity; but the moment of strong passion was unfavourable to cool consideration. "O cease, my dearest girl!" interrupted Miss Powerscourt, "cease to urge the only proposal to which I cannot accede. Even your mother, all prudent, all self-possessed as she is, would strongly reprobate so-
lemn perjury. Had this union not been proposed, my regard for lord
" Mon-

“Monteith should never have induced
“me to have taken any step contrary
“to my father’s will, nor should he
“have discovered that the sacrifice I
“made to filial duty was at the expence
“of my happiness. But to bind my-
“self for ever to another, when my
“heart is irrevocably his; to shut out
“every hope that time might remove
“my father’s reluctance; honour, de-
“licacy, affection, nay, even my esteem
“for Henry Powerscourt, all strongly
“forbid such an unhallowed bond!”

Lucy was quite a convert to these arguments; but when Geraldine again called upon her to suggest some plan of conduct that might obviate these threatened evils, the artless weeping girl could form no other scheme than that she should throw herself at sir William’s feet and own a pre-engagement. Miss Powerscourt seemed not to have sufficient

cient courage for a discovery which she apprehended must produce disagreeable events; but while depressed and unresolved, she seemed firm in nothing but that she would ultimately reject her cousin's hand. The important eclairsissement came from another quarter.

I shall pass over many unimportant conversations to give a fuller account of the interview in which sir William unequivocally, and in sure expectation of a joyful acceptance, informed his kinsman of his design to make him the heir of his fortunes, and the depositary of his daughter's happiness. But when he expected to see the highly-favoured youth break out in a strain of grateful rapture, (for even his phlegmatic temper expected rapturous acceptance when Geraldine was the gift,) how cruelly was he disappointed to see his countenance betray distress almost bordering upon

upon despair; and to hear him in grateful, respectful, but decisive terms, reject the radiant, the alluring prize. Sir William stood motionless with astonishment to see the "cloud-capt tower" he had been so many years erecting prove in one moment to be only "the baseless fabric of a vision;" and as I conceive my readers must be equally planet-struck, I cannot help asking them, in a tone of exultation, whether I have not attained the grand climax of improbability? whether the legends of modern romance, modern poetry, or the modern drama, can produce a situation so novel and striking?

That a prudent, diffident young man, who, without having absolutely laid a plan to make his fortune, was anxiously solicitous to be relieved from a dependence which he severely felt; that such a one, I say, without any preconceived design

design upon lady Bridget Autumn's estate, or the jointure of the duchess dowager of Witherington, should refuse the young, lovely, fascinating Geraldine, when offered to him by her father, with the immediate possession of three thousand a year, and a certain assurance of an additional five thousand per annum on his death;—I think I have been too diffident in only challenging my contemporaries in the circle of the Belles Lettres to rival me in the non-natural; I might also call upon the *philosophers* of the new school, and ask the illustrious sophists if they can form a paradox more perfectly incomprehensible.

But, notwithstanding my passionate love of fame compels me to adopt the most fashionable, that is, the certain method of obtaining it, I cannot quite conquer the common foible of old people, that of looking back to the
times

times I have seen, and thinking them somewhat better than the present days. Indeed now and then I am rude enough to conjecture that the modern Parnassus is seated very near that "windy sea of land," which Milton names the Limbo of Vanity, the residence of

"All th' unaccomplish'd works of Nature's hand
"Abortive, monstrous, or unkindly mix'd."

Regretting that simple elegance and rational amusement should be sacrificed to high sounding phrases and inconceivable wonders, signifying nothing, I sometimes invoke the shades of Addison, Goldsmith, and Fielding; and, after having contemplated the forms of nature or morality which their antiquated pages present, I in vain endeavour to be amused with ghosts and dungeons, incident without character, or character without effect. These last sentences
recal

recal my wandering pen, by suggesting to me that criticism may be as jejune and irrelative as the novel or poem which it condemns; and that the satirist of the taste and morals of others must from prudence avoid exhibiting any thing reprehensible in her own.

Taught by that "warning voice" to shun the rock of digression, I must inform my readers, that the absurdity of my plan may be rather apparent than real. Henry Powercourt might have some private reasons for his extraordinary conduct. He might have a pre-engagement; and no lover under twenty would hesitate to offer a few annual thousands on the shrine of Cupid. He might be enamoured of academic shades, and think, like Shakespeare's Henry VI.

"Marriage! alas, my years are yet too young,

"And fitter is my study and my books:"

Or

Or the vivacity of Geraldine might intimidate him as much as Beatrice's did Benedict, and induce him to offer "to go on an embassy to Prester John or the Antipodes, rather than encounter that lady's tongue."—What his real reasons were must not now be developed; but, knowing the pain of curiosity, I cannot help owning, notwithstanding my usual reserve, that I know them, and that they shall be explained in their proper place.

The reader must remember that I have left sir William in rather an awkward situation. Some little hope that there might be a mutual misunderstanding induced him to repeat the offer; and, in a tone that indicated not only surprise but displeasure, he asked Henry if this was what he meant to refuse? The embarrassed youth gave a hesitating "Yes,"
and

and turned aside to conceal the strong emotion of his agitated heart. "You are not ignorant, Henry," said sir William, "that my fortune is entirely at my own disposal, and that all your inheritance is an estate of your father's, somewhat under a hundred a year."

"I know it, sir," answered Henry in a voice scarcely audible; "I know too how infinitely I am beholden to your bounty, and that I could sacrifice my life to prove my gratitude."

"Pho! pho!" said sir William, "a fiddle-stick about gratitude and such nonsense; talking about these things is not to the purpose; I meant to have been a greater friend to you than I have been; but I suppose you have some reasons for your behaviour, and so I shall only add that I wish you a better offer."

He

He then left the room, while the afflicted Henry, wretched at the idea that he had offended the person whom of all others he most revered and esteemed sunk upon a sofa, and fell into a painful reverie on his past conduct. His motives appeared so laudable, that he could not upon retrospection wish the deed undone; he only feared that his voice, his looks, his words, or his manner, had not sufficiently indicated the deep veneration which he felt in his heart.

In a conversation which took place the same morning between sir William and his daughter, the former animadverted on Henry's unaccountable conduct in terms more acrimonious than he had ever before used. As a proof of the uncommon sweetness of Miss Powercourt's disposition, she appeared not only to forgive the affront, but she even
pleaded

pleaded for the bold refuser with all that enchanting eloquence by which she had ever been accustomed to influence her father's mind.

"I cannot, my dear sir," said she, "condemn Henry's behaviour; on the contrary, I think it proceeded from that inviolable regard for honour and sincerity which you tell me has been from time immemorial the characteristic of our family. A mean interested person would have thought that your predilection in his favour gave him an absolute right to treat me as he pleased; he would never have considered whether I was the wife he would voluntarily have preferred. Looking only at the greatness of my dowry, he would at all times have silenced the compunctions of his conscience, by remembering that I was obtruded upon his choice, when perhaps his

“ heart felt a secret preference for another.”

While Miss Powerscourt spoke, her look, voice, and manner, were uncommonly beautiful and impressive. Sir William gazed upon her within expressible delight; and when she stopped, he only observed, that he thought there were few young men in the kingdom who would not have been overjoyed at such a proposal.

“ Parental partiality,” resumed Geraldine, “ must not decide on such an important point; but let not my dearest father, through his fondness for me, swerve from that noble integrity which has ever been the rule of his actions. From motives of delicacy to myself I must entreat that the events of this morning may make no difference in your opinion of Henry. Indeed I should think that as the
“ highly-

“ highly-liberal plan you had formed in
“ his favour is now frustrated, this is
“ the properest time to give him the in-
“ dependence you design for him. Sup-
“ pose you immediately resign the Me-
“ rionethshire estate. It is but five hun-
“ dred a-year you know; and if such a
“ defalcation in your revenue should any
“ way derange your customary charities,
“ permit me, my dear father, to surren-
“ der part of that very ample allowance
“ which you give me. It really is much
“ more than I know how to spend; it
“ only makes me thoughtless and extra-
“ vagant; and I am sure that abridging
“ it would be a good moral lesson.”

“ Speak no more, child, upon this sub-
“ ject,” replied sir William; “ nobody
“ shall say that I brought a young fel-
“ low up, and then let him starve be-
“ cause he was not willing to marry
“ my daughter; but there is no neces-

“sity for choosin’ the very time of his
“disobligin’ me to make him inde-
“pendent, as you call it. I have been
“put out of humour this morning, and I
“will take a ride round my farm to
“get myself comfortable again. I
“don’t see that Henry’s stayin’ here
“longer is of any use, and I shall tell
“him that he may as well set off for
“Oxford when I come home.”

Henry was roused from his stupor by
a letter from Geraldine, which I shall
transcribe :

“TO HENRY POWERSCOURT, Esq.

“Your conduct, my noble cousin,
“during the tryin’ incidents of this
“morning, superadds to the esteem
“and confidence which I have ever
“felt for you, the indelible tie of fer-
“vent gratitude. If I ever appear to
“forget your generous behaviour, add
“to

“ to the list of those infamous women
 “ of antiquity whom you have often
 “ reprobated, the more infamous name
 “ of Geraldine Powerscourt, who basely
 “ neglected the disinterested friend who
 “ risked all his fairest hopes to alleviate
 “ her sorrows.

“ Be not grieved, my ever-respected
 “ Henry, at the apprehension of my
 “ father’s anger. It must not, it shall
 “ not continue. His own excellent
 “ heart will not permit the disappoint-
 “ ment of a favourite plan to inspire
 “ lasting resentment against the worthy
 “ youth who is an honour to his name.
 “ Perhaps, under the present circum-
 “ stances, it will be better for you not
 “ to meet, at least till he can see you
 “ without too keenly regretting that
 “ you cannot be his son. I have heard
 “ you express a wish to visit Italy; does
 “ that wish continue, or has it been

“supplanted by some other desire? Say,
 “in what way can I prove that mine is
 “not a mere wordy gratitude; write to
 “me as soon as you get to Oxford, for
 “I can taste no true satisfaction unless
 “I hear that you are happy.

“GERALDINE POWERSCOURT.”

I hope it will not be deemed an imputation on Mr. Powerscourt's fortitude, if I should affirm, that on reading this letter his eyes were observed to be suffused with tears. With a faltering voice he ordered his horses. He attempted to write a few lines, but his hand was too tremulous, and his thoughts too confused to perform the task. The destined heir of sir William Powerscourt, renouncing all those splendid prospects which had opened upon him, returned to the academic shades which, warm with the most sanguine hopes, he had left the
 week

week before. He returned poor in every worldly possession, dejected, and dismayed; but rich in integrity, rich in the noble consciousness of approving virtue.

CHAP. XI.

———Here, before Heaven,
I ratify this my rich gift. O Ferdinand!
Do not smile at me that I boast her off;
For thou wilt find she will outstrip all praise,
And make it halt behind her.

SHAKESPEARE.

THE earl of Monteith was too ardent a votary of Cupid, to hear with indifference of his rival's proceedings. On the first intelligence that Henry was arrived at Powerscourt, his lordship's valet received orders to examine and clean the locks of his silver-mounted pistols, and to have a sufficient quantity of powder and ball ready at the shortest notice. Alarmed for his lord's life, Beaufoy instantly informed lord W. of this bloody preparation, who again prevailed

vailed upon his young friend to wait patiently for the effect of Miss Powercourt's evident predilection in his favour.

Meantime the "tall long-sided dame" whom Hudibras characterises as a "tattling gossip," having received some hint of what was really intended at Powercourt-house, blazoned it with all her powers; and, knowing that the intelligence must be particularly interesting at W. park, she put her swiftest winged emissaries into motion. These, gentle reader, were not ærial sylphs, or "Iris gliding down her painted bow:" modern prose is severely restricted from the use of such ornamental machinery. I can only introduce a lame dowager of consummate prudence and known candour, who had her old horses driven ten miles through the dirt to wonder with lady W. that any young lady could reject

lord Monteith, and accept Henry Powerscourt, and to reprobate the extravagant demand of eight hundred a-year for pin money, on which the intended bride had positively insisted. Another of Fame's busy messengers was a gentleman fox-hunter, a man of extreme caution and undoubted veracity, who affirmed at lord W.'s public dinner, that he had met two barristers and a serjeant at law riding post to sir William's that very day. On one of the company observing, that three lawyers consulting upon a settlement was rather unusual, squire Western affirmed with an oath, that one of his neighbours told him sir William would have it so: "These lawyers," said he, "are sad quarrelsome fellows, and if two of them should disagree, I will have the third ready to be umpire; for the wedding shall take place next week."

Nobody

Nobody now could doubt his testimony, the words were so very like what fir William would say.

When the gentlemen adjourned to the drawing-room, the busy sprite I have before alluded to had taken possession of that goodly field, and instigated a lady, at the hazard of engrossing too much of the conversation, to enumerate all the bride's paraphernalia. One part of the company indeed affirmed, that they were told Miss Powerscourt secretly disapproved of the match; but three young ladies, influenced by the same supernatural agency, protested that they knew better. They were, they said, her very intimate friends, and were entrusted by her with the secret of her attachment to her cousin, which had subsisted from their earliest years. During these narratives, the countenance of Monteith varied from the crimson glow of rage to

the livid hue of jealousy ; and, as he was not sufficiently versed in the science of self-command to conceal his strong emotions, the ladies were all highly entertained with the idea that he really was very much in love still; forgetting, or perhaps having never read in the fable, that what is sport to one may be death to another.

It was only by repeated observations, that all those reports could not be true, and that the lady's word deserved confidence, that lord W. could prevail upon his noble guest to suspend the execution of his sanguinary designs. At this crisis the unexpected, the transporting intelligence arrived, that Henry was certainly gone in disgrace from Powerfcourt; but neither the lame dowager, the cautious fox-hunter, the criticising lady, nor even the *intimate friends* of Geraldine, could tell why.

The

The state of affairs, both at the park and at sir William's, soon underwent a surprising revolution. The lovely Geraldine, with steps once more light as the wood-nymph's, flew to communicate to her dear Lucy the intelligence which her sparkling eyes, and the smiles that played around her fascinating face, had already anticipated. Lord Monteith had renewed his addresses in the most passionate but respectful terms; and sir William, contrasting such strong attachment with Henry's cold refusal, had declared, that as his own plans were frustrated, he should have no longer any objection to his lordship, provided some peculiar conditions were granted, with which Monteith joyfully complied. "Felicitate me, Lucy," added Miss Powerscourt, "upon the happy change in my situation. I scorn the mean affectation of keeping a ge-
nerous.

“nerous heart in suspense. I have
 “owned to my father, that I regretted
 “his rejection of lord Monteith. Nay,”
 added she, leaning her blushing face
 on Miss Evans’s shoulder, “I have con-
 “fessed that my affections are irrevoca-
 “bly fixed upon the most constant, the
 “most generous of men.”

I will trust that the active imagina-
 tions of my readers will delineate all
 the scenes of joyous congratulation,
 courtship, and preparation, which inter-
 vened between sir William’s acceptance
 of lord Monteith’s offers, and the nup-
 tial solemnity; and will only premise,
 that, as the principal figures on the can-
 vass were people of elevated rank and
 deeply in love, the execution should be
 masterly. An enamoured earl must
 certainly express his sentiments in more
 dignified periods than an enamoured
 viscount; and if this observation be ex-
 tended

tended through all the "privileged orders," my prudence in shrinking from the hazardous attempt of recording the loftier flights of heroic love is worthy of some credit; particularly in these times, when every novelist permits his plain Williams and Richards to address their mistresses in terms that would formerly have been allowed only to an Archduke or a Count Palatine, except indeed the hero was a professed knight-errant, to whom the use of extravagant hyperbole has belonged from time immemorial.

Let it then be supposed, that after the noble lover had many times repeated his injunctions to Phœbus to "gallop apace his fiery-footed steeds," and had chided creeping Time for not "speeding on the lagging hours," the auspicious morning at last arrived, and the lovely pair, attended by many of the neighbouring

bouring gentry, and a numerous cavalcade, composed of sir William's tenants, proceeded to the parish church, where Mr. Evans joined their hands, amid the acclamations of hundreds, whom the unrefined but liberal hospitality of the worthy baronet had assembled on this joyful occasion.

Though female delicacy would gladly have escaped the oppressive state of public celebration, yet Geraldine was determined not to oppose her father's known predilection for all those antiquated customs which were derived from the feudal barons, whom he gloried in imitating. Gratified in the object of her choice, lady Monteith presided with unaffected sweetness and polished grace at those festal entertainments by which sir William strove to diffuse on all around him the overflowing satisfaction of his own heart.

I shall

I shall here perhaps be asked, how his general dislike to lords and love-matches, his plans in favour of Henry, and his wishes to perpetuate his own name and family, could be so soon forgotten. This last objection is answered by observing, that a clause in the marriage-settlement secured the inheritance of sir William's fortune to the second son of this marriage, who was expressly enjoined to receive the name of his maternal grandfather; or, in case of no second son, the eldest daughter was to convey the Powerscourt honours to her husband. A disposition like sir William's, though prone to pursue a favourite speculation with eagerness, will not renounce every future good, because its primary wish has proved impracticable, but will speedily return to that harmonized tranquillity which best accords with its natural feelings. When the doating father

ther saw that lord Monteith beheld his Geraldine with nearly the same idolizing preference as he did himself, he forgot that he was a peer, and he almost became a convert to the opinion, that a love-match was well enough now and then.

Beside the clause already mentioned, the deed of settlement contained another of a very extraordinary nature. It was, that on lady Monteith's succeeding to her inheritance, two thousand pounds a-year should be solely appropriated to her, that is to say, not merely the income, but the absolute power of giving or bequeathing it to whomsoever she chose. Lord Monteith's lawyer stated this demand to be extremely adverse to the interests of his noble client, whose whole fortune was entailed upon the issue of this marriage; and even sir William thought that his dear girl was
a little

a little unaccountable, in asking for a power injurious to the interests of her own children. The lady, however, persisted in the request, which was indeed the only one she urged; and the matter being referred to lord Monteith, he, with lover-like complacency, insisted that all opposition on the part of his counsel should be immediately withdrawn.

It was also stipulated, that sir William should be gratified with the company of his daughter and son-in-law for three months every year at Powerfcourt. The good baronet, on proposing this condition, explained the motives to lord Monteith: "I do not doubt, my lord, but that as you will soon have a pretty large concern in these parts, you will be anxious to get acquainted with the neighbourhood, and to know the characters of
" your

“ your dependants. I am now, my
“ lord, very old, and every thing must
“ soon be yours and Geraldine’s. It
“ gives me pleasure to think that I shall
“ leave you a set of upright worthy te-
“ nants; and I trust you will act a fa-
“ ther’s part by them, as I and my an-
“ cestors always have done. I will in-
“ troduce them all to you before you
“ leave us. Poor souls! they have been
“ used to have their landlords live
“ among them on free and sociable
“ terms, and it will grieve them not
“ to see the chimnies of Powerscourt
“ smoke as they used to do. However,
“ I shall not expect that your lordship
“ can live here more than four months
“ in the year when it comes to be your
“ own; I know you have a seat in Par-
“ liament, and when very particular
“ business is going on, you must cer-
“ tainly be in London; for the affairs of
“ the

"the nation are of more consequence
 "than the interests of fifty or sixty
 "country yeomen. You have a very
 "fine castle too of your own near Loch
 "Lomond, falling quite to decay, I
 "hear, your ancestors having neglected
 "it for several years. That is a sad pity,
 "I think: doubtless, my lord, you will
 "wish to go down there and fit it up
 "again. Geraldine will be very happy
 "to assist you in beautifying it, and
 "making it a comfortable residence."

It will not be very surprising that
 some local reflections should induce sir
 William to lay a particular stress on the
 word *comfortable*. Lord Monteith, start-
 ing from a reverie, exclaimed, "O, un-
 doubtedly!" Sir William, who dis-
 covered that he had been totally absent
 during his whole harangue, perceiving
 the object which had fixed his attention,
 smiled,

smiled, and forgave him. Nor will my readers be inexorable, when I tell them that the object was the beautiful Geraldine, who, with her "loose hair floating in the wind," unconscious that she attracted any observation, swept the soft strings of her harp in a neighbouring alcove, and chaunted, with her melodious voice, the following air:

Come, Cupid, with ambrosial flowers,
Rear'd in thy own Idalian bowers,
My nuptial wreath adorn;
Here let the purple am'ranth bloom,
Mix'd with the lily's chaste perfume,
And a rose without thorn.

O! haste, each classic symbol choose,
The laurel sacred to the Muse
Of elegance and taste;
With these thy Mother's myrtle bind,
Best emblem of a placid mind,
With gifts perennial grac'd!

I do

I do not ask thy frolic hand
To weave the perishable band
That fades on fashion's brow ;
My constant soul a tie requires,
Firm as the virtue which inspires
And dignifies my vow.

Give me the mild persuasive art,
Which holds the captivated heart
In unregretted toils ;
Shed thy own lustre o'er my face,
When beauty mourns each ravish'd grace,
And youth no longer smiles.

Perplexing doubts my bosom tear ;
Oh ! let me fan with vestal care
The Hymeneal fire ;
Guard it from passion's wild extreme,
And bid its salutary beam
With life alone expire * !

Having

* Mrs. Prudentia is very sorry that she has not absolutely conformed to the opinion of the Reviewers, who bestowed such liberal praise upon her prose, by entirely banishing the vagrant Muse. She has a most unlucky knack of " hitching into rhyme ;"

Having now gradually led my readers to that point where I at first rather abruptly introduced them, I shall endeavour to proceed strait forward during the remainder of my narrative.

rhyme;" and when the bantlings are produced, she had rather that they stuck on the top shelf of a book-case, than that they should be immediately committed to the flames. With regard to their advice of publishing her poetical productions separately, she can only answer, that she has repeatedly made the unfortunate experiment. Her bookfellers all agree in one sentiment, "Poetry will not go off."

CHAP. XII.

As humorous as Winter, and as sudden
As flaws congealed in the spring of day.
His temper, therefore, must be well observ'd.
Chide him for faults, but do it reverently.

SHAKESPEARE.

LORD MONTEITH was one of those common characters which the world every day produces, and which a very little penetration will easily unravel. His abilities were not conspicuous, and his application to the improvement of them had been as great as a rich heir, early become his own master, usually bestows. He possessed a great deal of good temper, and that open-hearted easy generosity which always succeeds in securing general good opinion. His passions were naturally very strong; and never having been taught the necessity

of restraining them, they were increased by continual gratification, till they somewhat resembled the impetuous torrent. Nature intended him to be humane and beneficent; but a neglect of discipline and constant indulgence had introduced an indolent selfishness. Yet still, if a good deed required no great exertion, or if an object in distress luckily presented itself at a moment when he was disengaged from any favourite pursuit, he would not only shew a noble liberality, but also enjoyed a noble pleasure from the benevolent deed.

A character like lord Monteith's rather fitted its possessor to follow others, than to be a leader. Unhappily for him, his birth and fortune obtruded him into notice, and placed him in situations to which his natural talents were unequal. The splendor of his rank and his reputed munificence surrounded him

him with parasites; and the impetuosity of his temper prevented him from having any directing friend. Lord W., at whose house he lately resided, was a man of the world, very solicitous that his noble guest should form a proper matrimonial connection; but extending the idea of propriety no farther than to the fortune, the family, or perhaps the personal graces of the lady; and though the young earl, during his paroxysms of love, added to these allurements every angelic quality, he did not accurately define what those angelic qualities really were. Such was the man whom the purblind god, in one of his capricious moments, selected to be the husband of the beautiful, animated, intelligent Geraldine Powerscourt; whose feelings exquisitely susceptible, had been accustomed to the regular tenor of gentle manners, uniform

form consistent goodness, and every fond indulgence and mild endearment that parental tenderness could bestow.

The sentiments with which the young couple approached the altar of Hymen were as dissimilar as their characters. The bridegroom thought no further of the awful ceremony, than as it was the means of putting him in possession of an elegant and beautiful woman, upon whose account he had felt a great deal of uneasiness. He supposed that this event would of course greatly increase his stock of happiness; but as to any abridgment of his former pleasures, or any serious duties imposed by the character of a husband, he had not the least idea of such disagreeable restrictions. He was, indeed, firmly of opinion, that inclination would in future strongly attach him to home, and that he should find the society of his beloved "a perpetual

petual fountain of domestic sweets;" but should that expectation be disappointed, (and some of his married friends had complained that they had been taken-in on a similar occasion,) would any body pretend to say that he had no right to make himself as comfortable as was in his power? He had already a fine house, elegant carriages, and a numerous retinue; he was very seldom at home, to be sure, but he believed that the housekeeper and the steward went on very well; and should he (which was scarcely possible) find no more attractions in his own fire-side when graced by the presence of a charming wife, he saw nothing in the marriage ceremony which forbade his making himself happy elsewhere.

The more correct principles and refined imagination of lady Monteith taught her to consider the man whom

she vowed to love, honour, and obey, as the partner of all her joys and sorrows, the lord of her destiny, the guardian of her character, and the guide of her conduct. Conscious that death alone could dissolve the solemn bond into which she had just entered, her most anxious wishes were pointed to one end, that of being for ever amiable in her husband's eyes. She determined to study his disposition with the most assiduous care, to comply with his peculiarities, and by imperceptible, because gentle means, gradually to inspire that delicacy of taste and sentiment which even her partial judgment discovered to be wanting in his character. Had her observations been more profound, shade after shade must have appeared; yet, perhaps, had she even seen the whole portrait in its true colours, her strong predilection, and the sanguine hopes which

which inexperienced youth (and I must add youthful vanity too) had tempted her to form of being able to make a complete revolution in his character, would have encouraged her to attempt the hazardous experiment. She never reflected, that the tender indulgence to which she had been accustomed must render the perpetual renunciation of her own desires a painful task; nor was her experience sufficient to teach her, that the refinements which she meant to introduce, like delicate exotics, could only flourish in a congenial soil.

The first instance that the bridegroom gave of that habitual self-indulgence, and disregard to the wishes of others, which might be said to be the predominant feature in his mind, was an impatience to leave Powerscourt long before sir William had finished half his plans of festal glee. His lordship had, with vi-

fible *ennui*, endured the tediousness of a public day, and given such half-civil answers to the exclamation of "I heartily wish you joy, my lord!" which burst upon him from every quarter, as to excite a doubt in the congratulators, whether he really was or was not glad that he was married. At dinner, he was only amused by observing the indiscriminating appetites of country gentlemen; and when the cloth was removed, as he found himself the object of general attention, he determined to give no vexatious preference; and therefore confining all consideration to his own reveries, he continued drawing lines upon the table with the madeira or claret, and proceeded no further in the way of discourse than by a hum or a smile. While his right-hand neighbour was describing the best method of improving land, his left explained

plained the advantages of inland navigation, and the gentleman opposite addressed to him a long narrative explanatory of the difficulties attending a lawsuit which had been awarded to him at the last Caernarvon assizes. Their manner was verbose, and they talked all together: his lordship, therefore, concluded that they said nothing worthy of attention, and that the chagrin he felt arose from the want of superior society.

He seized the first opportunity of withdrawing from the company to the countess's dressing-room, and on entering flung himself upon a sofa, with so loud a yawn as to alarm her ladyship and Miss Evans with serious apprehensions that he was taken ill. "Are not you well?" exclaimed the former with tender anxiety. "It is impossible to be well among such bores," returned his lordship. "I have been talk'd-at

“all the afternoon, and cannot for my
“soul remember one single sentence
“that has been uttered. I am deter-
“mined to go to London the first op-
“portunity: living here three months
“would be the death of me. I protest,
“my charming Geraldine, that you put
“me in mind of a rose growing in the
“middle of a wilderness.”

Lady Monteith could scarcely enjoy a compliment which conveyed such strong contempt for what she had ever been accustomed to view with affectionate regard. She smothered a sigh, and assumed a faint smile. But the smile and the sigh were alike disregarded. Her lord's attention was now engrossed by a favourite spaniel; with that he amused himself for a few moments, and then dropped asleep upon the sofa.

Another incident a few days after this displayed his humour in a still stronger light.

light. Sir Ralph and lady Morgan sent an invitation in form, requesting the honour of the bride and bridegroom's company at their seat to a dinner and a ball given in honour of their nuptials. The invitation was written on an elegant card, decorated by her ladyship's own pencil with Lilliputian Cupids lighting their tiny torches. Twenty years ago the Morgans were people in high life, and even the gallant Monteith would not then have blushed to have appeared at her ladyship's parties; but twenty years are sufficient to annihilate mighty empires, and must unquestionably cause great revolutions in a private family. Just before his affairs were irretrievable, sir Ralph discovered, that to be one of the very first people is a preliminary step to becoming nobody; and his lady reflected on the danger of coquetry and dissipation before the last

false step had entirely ruined her character. They had sufficient good sense to resolve on mutual amendment; plans of retirement and œconomy were immediately adopted, and regular perseverance in these salutary measures had enabled them to resume their old family splendor a little before lady Monteith's marriage. Certainly at this period nobody knew the Morgans; and her ladyship's knowledge of the fashionable world was so antedated, that the very card she intended should announce her indisputable claim to superior elegance, convinced lord Monteith that she must be a mere *fal-lal*, and that the visit would prove a *bore*: as a natural consequence, he determined not to go.

On the day appointed, the countess, attired in all her bridal splendor, in compliment to her father's old friend, waited for her lord's approach to lead her to her

her chariot. Her lord appeared in his morning dishabille, and in a half-whisper announced his resolution not to go. "I hate state visits," said he, "and I never could endure country balls in all my life."—"But this," returned the countess, raising her pleading eyes, "is absolutely given in compliment to us."—"Never mind, never mind," continued his lordship, hurrying her to the carriage, and at the same time holding a handkerchief to his mouth: "You can make an apology. You see I have got a terrible tooth-ach; upon my soul, I would not go for a thousand pounds. Come, your father waits; you will be too late." At these words he lifted her into the chaise, and then, with the voice of one in extreme pain, exclaimed, "Best compliments—sorry I can't do myself the honour—make
 "haste,

“haste, my love; if you are too late, I shall be miserable.”

Lady Monteith had now, for the first time in her life, the painful task of apologizing for what she conceived to be a moral impropriety in the conduct of a person whom she tenderly loved. Unused to disguise, she faltered in her excuses, which, indeed, seemed rather to make the affair worse than to improve it. She found every thing at the Morgans in state array; the entertainment was conducted with great decorum; and nothing but the lamented absence of lord Monteith seemed to render deficient the *éclat* of the scene. To compensate for the bridegroom's rudeness, the bride thought it her duty to exert herself with greater assiduity; but her attentions were ungraceful, her wit forced, and her laughter artificial. After having endured a most irksome evening,

evening, she returned home, and found that the noble invalid had completely banished his tooth-ach and his chagrin, by witnessing the amusements of an as-race.

Lady Monteith listened with seeming interest to the ludicrous accidents to which rustic competition had given rise, and then ventured upon a gentle expostulation on his absenting himself from a scene which must have afforded him superior pleasure. Her description of the entertainment and the company made his lordship a convert to her opinion, and, unsolicited, he set off the next morning to the Morgans, to make a personal apology for his absence. He found them so unexpectedly agreeable, that on a slight invitation he spent the day with them, and returned home, not ashamed of his own caprice, but vexed that he had missed the pleasantest party
that

that had occurred since his residence in Caernarvonshire. Not that he was any way to blame; his earliest recollection did not furnish him with one instance of his having acted wrong; the fault lay entirely in the unlucky Cupids and the painted card.

The season of the year of which I am now treating was May, a period when the country holds out its pleasures only to the studious, the industrious, and the contented. It is of all times the most insipid to the sportsman, who, being deprived of all chance of breaking his neck or blowing out his brains, is obliged to hurry up to town to avoid the puerility of gathering primroses, and listening to the cawing of rooks. Lord Monteth had already found his nuptial felicity less perfect than his expectations had conceived; but this, for the reasons I have above stated, could not be
from

from any error in his own behaviour, or any impropriety in his own judgment : nor did it proceed from the imperfections of his adorable Geraldine, who proved to be the angelic creature he had before supposed her : it was all owing to the odious country, to sir William's odd ways, and to the *twaddling* people whom he suffered to visit him. In London, he should undoubtedly enjoy the expected paradise ; there his lovely girl must attract universal admiration ; he should breathe another air, enjoy a different society, receive the congratulations of all his own friends ; in short, he must set off for town immediately.

When, with many polite expressions of regret for being obliged to shorten his visit at Powerscourt, lord Monteith first acquainted sir William with the necessity of his going up to town, the latter discovered great surprise that he should choose

choofe to go to that disagreeable place
juft when parliament was fo near break-
ing up, and that there was no more na-
tional bufinefs of importance to settle.
“ This,” faid he, “ feems to be the
“ very time that you fhould take a
“ trip to Scotland, to examine the plans
“ of your architects, to fet them to
“ work, and to get the foil fmoother and
“ ready to plant next autumn. I am
“ afraid, my lord, you are not natu-
“ rally fond of a country life; but it is
“ only becaufe you have never been
“ ufed to it. Get acquainted with your
“ neighbours; confider the intereft
“ which you have in the fcenes around
“ you; remember how much good you
“ may do in a fpot where you reign
“ like a little king, compared to what
“ you can do in London, and you will
“ foon be as fond of Monteith as I am
“ of Powerscourt.”

The

The manner in which sir William uttered these expressions was too much marked by dignified benevolence to admit of ridicule; and the unfortunate lord would have been compelled to give up his London journey from the mere want of arguments to defend its expediency, had not accident favoured him with a convenient reason for putting his designs in execution, which even sir William allowed to be indisputable.

CHAP. XIII.

So mourn'd the dame of Ephesus her love.

SHAKESPEARE.

ON the marriage of lord Monteith, an express was dispatched to Kinloch castle, to inform lady Arabella Macdonald and lady Madelina Frazer of the joyful event. The messenger on his arrival found the castle attired in the most sombrous weeds of woe, owing to the death of its *ostensible* master, sir Simon Frazer, who, after having existed for several years in a state of complete inanity, expired at the patriarchal age of ninety-two, to the great grief of his inconsolable consort.

As lady Madelina was too much absorbed in woe publicly to take an active part in the concerns of the family, the dispatches were opened by lady Arabella, who

who acted as mistress during the seclusion of her aunt. She read her brother's account of his marriage to the most excellent and beautiful of women, and, after casting a side glance at the chimney-glass which reflected her own figure, she proceeded to open a letter from her new sister, which expressed a hope that the endearing tie of friendship would soon be added to that of kindred; but what appeared to the reader to be the most significant part of the epistle was that where lady Monteith added a pressing invitation to their house in London, and an assurance that she should rejoice in the opportunity of exerting all her abilities to promote the happiness of any of her lord's friends.

The general etiquette of Kinloch castle had establish a rule of decorum which extended to the most trivial occurrences. Every motion was to be
grave

grave and consequential; and a run could only be justified by one wing of the house being on fire, or by the appearance of an enemy on the coast. So strict were these injunctions, that lady Madelina herself could not dispense with them even upon the affecting incident of sir Simon's death; for, on being informed, that if she wished to see him alive she must come immediately, she rose with her usual majesty, and, throwing her train into its proper graceful folds, moved with slow and stately steps to the door of the apartment, where she found, to her deep regret, that she was come too late; a circumstance the more to be lamented, as he went off in a fit, and had nobody with him but his old valet, who was lame with the rheumatism. These observations will more clearly point out the gross impropriety of lady Arabella's conduct, who with a joyful

joyful exclamation of "O ! my brother
 " is married, and I will go to Lon-
 " don," set off full speed to her aunt's
 apartment.

The sorrows of that lady, though of
 too deep a cast to admit more than one
 narrow stripe of daylight, were not so
 wholly sublime, as not to require now
 and then a few adventitious supports.
 The room in which sir Simon lay in
 state was contiguous to her own. She
 visited it every day, and was most sedu-
 lously exact in having the emblazon-
 ment completed in the highest style of
 heraldry. In a remote country, where
 few events occur to excite the attention
 of the curious, a feudal laird lying in
 state in his own castle was an agreeable
 novelty ; and as the relict was not averse
 to the exhibition, sir Simon became a
 much more interesting object after he
 was dead, than ever he had been when
 alive.

alive. All who saw, by repeating what they had seen, excited the attention of others. Mutes were standing all the way up the stairs; all the state apartments were hung with black; tapers as big as men; plumes of feathers as large as those of Otranto, and escutcheons and achievements, were placed at every corner. Several of the lady-visitants, after having seen all these astonishing things, pleaded the rights of friendship, and entreated that their strong desire of combating lady Madelina's extreme grief might waive the rules of *etiquette*, and, after a little reluctance, they were admitted into her apartment. She *generally* fainted upon receiving company, though *sometimes*, if she found herself exhausted, she only exhibited a flood of tears, and called upon the dear shade of her lamented lord. They *generally* reasoned her into a state of calmness

and resignation; and *sometimes*, if the visitants were Frazers and only the wives or daughters of younger brothers, they sat down to a consolatory pool at quadrille. But even here her ladyship's sentimental tenderness was visible; for she could only be brought to play at that game from a recollection "that poor dear sir Simon, when he was quite himself, was remarkably partial to holding a lone-hand."

It was at such a time, and when lady Madelina was engaged with such a party, that lady Arabella, forgetting her uncle's death and her aunt's melancholy, rushed into the room, health on her cheek, joy in her eye, and the Monteith packet in her hand, calling out rather too loudly, "My brother is married to a Miss Powerscourt, and has asked me to come to London." The affecting word *married* flung poor lady Ma-

delina into hysterics, to which indeed the sudden entrance and loud exclamation had previously contributed. On her recovery another source of anxiety was started. Who were the Powerscourts? What alliances had they formed? Had any body ever heard of the family before? Luckily, a very skilful genealogist was present, whose information entirely obviated all anxiety upon the score of degradation; and her ladyship became tolerably composed. It was now declared to be the universal opinion, that she had indulged her melancholy quite long enough; that nothing was so good for bad spirits as a journey; and that it would be quite kind and condescending in her to pay a visit to the young couple. Her ladyship for some time strongly resisted the proposal; protested that her intentions were soon to follow sir Simon, whose
ghost

ghost she was sure still waited for her, and to die upon the very spot which contained his sacred remains. It seemed to be doubtful to the lady-comforters, whether sir Simon had not had enough of his lady's company, for they denied the fact about the ghost; and at last convinced her, that it was exceedingly wicked in a person of her age to talk of dying. After much diffuse argument, it was agreed that the interment should take place a fortnight sooner than was intended; and that when the escutcheons and achievements had been properly arranged, lady Madelina and her niece should prepare for their London journey. The latter closed the conversation by observing, that these were the only agreeable sounds she had heard since her arrival in Scotland.

While lady Arabella speeded the joyous preparation, and indulged all the

hopes of future pleasures and triumphs which youthful confidence, aided by her early recollection, could supply, lady Monteith took leave of Powerscourt with far different sentiments. The one, averting her eyes from the detested walls of Kinloch with an ardent wish never more to behold what she called a burying place for the living, could only be interested by subjects remotely connected with dear, dear London: the latter visited every spot which the amusements of her youth had endeared, and took leave of every acquaintance, domestic, and friend, with the soft regret of remembered kindness. Next to those sentiments which her ever-revered and beloved father excited, her separation from the Evans's called forth the most lively emotions. It was at first her intention to have requested that Lucy might accompany her to town; but, had
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not the proposed visit of her lord's relations induced her to postpone that desire till she could have been fully at liberty to enjoy the unrestrained pleasure of her society, the indisposition of Mrs. Evans would have frustrated the scheme. That excellent woman was now confined to her chamber by the increase of a disorder under which she had laboured for many years; and though her situation by no means excluded hope, her tender domestic daughter could seldom steal an hour from the pleasingly painful task of attending her, to breathe her fond wishes and fonder adieus to that dearest friend from whom she was now for the first time in her life going to be separated.

CHAP. XIV.

Lighter than air, Hope's summer-visions die,
 If but a fleeting cloud obscure the sky;
 If but a beam of sober Reason play,
 Lo, Fancy's fairy frost-work melts away!
 But can the wiles of art, the grasp of power,
 Snatch the rich relics of a well-spent hour?

PLEASURES OF MEMORY.

THE young countess, waving every form of state which might have proved inconvenient in a sick family, walked down to the parsonage, to bid farewell to her maternal friend, as she constantly styled the respectable sufferer. She came just at the time when Mrs. Evans was going to rise, and, claiming admittance with the privilege of long-established intimacy, employed herself in airing the good lady's shawl; while Lucy was busily engaged in assisting her mother

to

to dress, and in fixing her easy chair in a proper situation. Mrs. Evans looked at her noble guest with a tender smile. "I perceive, my dearest lady Monteith," said she, "that there is no alteration in your character. Your goodness and amiable vivacity has suffered no diminution from the reserve of rank or the etiquette of dignity; and see the effect it has upon us. We can consider you in no other light than that of our old friend. I admit you to a sick chamber, and treat you with a little groaning, while Lucy finds you some employment, as if you were still the playful Geraldine whom I had used alternately to correct and idolize. Do you remember dressing my cat in a blue jacket and trowsers, teaching it to walk upright, and protesting that it was the very image of your cousin Henry; and afterwards,

“ when you saw him crying at the com-
“ parison, giving him the new gold
“ watch your father had just bought
“ you, by way of consolation ?”

“ I have many unatoned sins to an-
“ swer for to Henry Powercourt,” said
lady Monteith gravely, “ worse than
“ tearing his best Virgil to paper my
“ baby-house, or causing the destruction
“ of his plaister of Paris busts by dres-
“ sing them in high crowned hats and
“ hooped petticoats to frighten the
“ house-maids. I have blasted his fairest
“ prospects ; but I have not forgot that
“ I owe him an indelible debt of grati-
“ tude. I have just received from him
“ an affecting congratulation. He
“ writes in a dispirited style, and com-
“ plains of a low fever ; but his wishes
“ for my happiness are breathed in such
“ a strong and affectionate manner,
“ that while I read his letter I felt—I
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“ know not what I felt, unless it was a
 “ wish that I had the power of making
 “ him as happy as he deserves.”

During lady Monteith's speech Miss Evans was employed in mixing her mother's medicine. Her hands appeared to tremble, she dropped the cup, and, while apologizing for her awkwardness, burst into tears. “ Your close confinement makes you nervous, my love,” said Mrs. Evans. “ Go into the garden, and water your little nurslings ; your friend will chat with me while you are gone ; and I felt so easy this morning, that I intended to omit the draught.”

Lucy instantly obeyed. Her mother's eyes followed her to the door ; they were then lifted to Heaven, as if enforcing a silent ejaculation, and finally settled upon lady Monteith with a look of supplicating earnestness.

Silence ensued for a few moments, which Mrs. Evans hesitatingly interrupted: "Till you are a mother, my
" dear madam, (said she,) you cannot
" know the full force of a mother's
" fears. Mine, perhaps, are exaggerated by my present weakness. It
" strikes me, that my dear girl's de-
" jection is even greater than my in-
" disposition, or your leaving us, could
" justify. While I have any hopes of
" recovery, I conceive myself obliged to
" avoid awakening her strong apprehen-
" sions upon my account; and I believe
" she is not aware that my present ill-
" ness is attended with symptoms of a
" more serious nature than appeared in
" any former attack. If my constitu-
" tion should prove weaker than my
" disease," continued she, with a still
more faltering voice, "I shall leave
" her to the protection of one of the
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“best of fathers; but men cannot so
 “well penetrate into the female heart,
 “they cannot treat our little peculiari-
 “ties so delicately as one of our own
 “sex. It would lighten my mind of
 “many cares could I discover whether
 “my child has any secret unhappiness;
 “even if it should prove such as I could
 “not remove, I could at least,” wiping
 the tear that would no longer be sup-
 pressed, “give her a mother’s last legacy
 “of advice and consolation.”

Lady Monteith understood this ap-
 peal, and prevented further inquiry by
 immediately replying, “You think,
 “perhaps, that my dearest Lucy may
 “have entrusted me with some secrets
 “which she has not revealed to you; but
 “I do assure you, if her innocent heart
 “ever formed any wish or attachment
 “with which you are unacquainted, her
 “delicacy would prevent her from
 L 6 “giving

“giving me the confidence which she
“denied to her justly venerated mother.
“It is only from such incidents as have
“just occurred, that I have gained a
“transitory insight respecting what passes
“in her mind; and perhaps my late ex-
“perience may have made me an accu-
“rate observer.”

“Do you mean her behaviour on
“dropping my medicine?” inquired
Mrs. Evans: “I saw nothing in that,
“except that she was dispirited and
“agitated.”

“You forget then,” observed the
countess, “that Henry Powerscourt was
“the subject of our conversation.”

A thousand circumstances crowded at
this instant into Mrs. Evans’s mind,
which confirmed the sagacity of her la-
dyship’s inference; but though the ac-
knowledged merit of the object lessened
the pain of the discovery, the tender
mother

mother could not, without apprehensive terror, be convinced, that love had "paled the roses on her daughter's cheek."

"I know of no one," said she, "to whom I could with greater confidence entrust my darling's happiness; yet so many cross accidents occur to blast our fairest schemes, that I own I with her heart had proved less susceptible. I do, however, hope that she is not a volunteer in her affections. You can, my dear lady Monteith, pardon my solicitude; but can you tell me whether Henry entertains reciprocal sentiments?"

Her ladyship appeared embarrassed by this inquiry. "I think," said she, "at present—I mean—I can hardly explain myself—Henry is too much attached to his studies and retirement; but I hope his chagrin—
" I mean

“ I mean his habits of seclusion will
“ wear off. His situation has been
“ very peculiar. It has hardly given
“ fair play to his affections. I trust he
“ will very soon be made independent;
“ I know he possesses great sensibility,
“ and I am persuaded that when his
“ circumstances are perfectly easy, when
“ he feels that he is his own master, if
“ opportunities for frequent interviews
“ should occur, our Lucy’s mild excel-
“ lencies must strike him in the most
“ forcible manner. I know her gene-
“ ral character has attracted his warm
“ approbation.”

Another tear stole from Mrs. Evans’s eyes. “ I see,” said she, “ my poor
“ girl has woven a net which will fa-
“ tally entangle her peace of mind during
“ the happiest hours of youth.”

“ No,” said lady Monteith, with
energy; “ if my friendship can break
“ this

“ this fatal web, my Lucy shall never
“ be unhappy. Nothing in my power
“ shall be omitted to forward the union
“ of two hearts that seem formed in the
“ same mould. But if Henry, contrary
“ to my expectations, should never
“ shew that partiality for my sweet
“ friend which her excellence deserves,
“ even Henry is not worthy of her,
“ and I will assist her naturally strong
“ sense and refined delicacy, in conquer-
“ ing an ill-placed attachment. I will
“ keep her secret with religious care :
“ I will seize the first opportunity to
“ have the dear girl with me ; I will
“ endeavour to fathom Henry’s heart,
“ and, without ostentatious eagerness,
“ will set her merits as strongly in his
“ view as propriety and decorum will
“ admit. If all should fail of the de-
“ sired effect, she never shall be left to
“ muse over her griefs in solitude. I
“ will

“ will amuse and console her, nor shall
“ she ever feel a sorrow which it is in
“ my power to remove.”

Mrs. Evans thanked the countess for these generous intentions, yet sighed at the fear of their being impracticable. The return of her daughter necessarily gave a check to the conversation, which now turned to the subject of lady Monteith's expected visitants. Her lord had pointed out to her the singularities of lady Madelina's character ; but his only observation on his sister was, that she was the prettiest creature he had ever seen, and that she fluttered up and down the castle like a bird in a cage. “ I expect,” said Geraldine, “ that I
“ shall be much captivated by the fair
“ recluse, whose behaviour at returning
“ into the world after a long estrange-
“ ment must be exceedingly interesting
“ and natural. My lord has her pic-
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“ture. It exhibits loveliness personified ; but it was drawn previous to her leaving England ; the character of the girl therefore is most predominant. I should name it untaught nature.”

“And what traits,” inquired Mrs. Evans, “do you suppose have been added by her residence in the wilds of Scotland ?”

“O, an infinitude !” replied the animated Geraldine, anxious to divert Lucy’s dejection, which the morning exercise had not quite removed. “As Lady Madelina was uncommonly severe, her pupil must be the essence of complying sweetness. As she was illiberal, proud, and reserved,—gentle Candour, yielding humility, and frank generosity, must mark the mind of a young woman who has had so many opportunities of observing the opposite odious faults.”

“Do

“ Do young women always observe
“ faults, and shun those they discover ?”
demanded Mrs. Evans.

“ No—only a gifted few, and prin-
“ cipally my Lucy and myself. I see,
“ my dear Mrs. Evans, you are going,
“ as usual, to censure my propensity
“ for determining characters from a mere
“ outline, and condemning or admiring
“ in the gross. I have often laboured
“ hard to convince you, that this fa-
“ culty is one of the peculiar gifts of
“ nature, and that though *you* must
“ judge from experience and considera-
“ tion, *I* may draw as clear inferences
“ from an intuitive art of guessing.
“ Ah ! I see you still shake your head
“ incredulously ; but Lucy shall be my
“ evidence. Do not I find out people
“ wonderfully soon, Lucy ? Am not I
“ completely mistress of their characters
“ and propensities before you can have
“ adjusted

“adjusted the propriety of their head-
“dress?”

Lucy with a smile acknowledged her friend's superior quickness ; but added,
“You forget one little circumstance.
“It has frequently cost you the trouble
“of a walk to the parsonage to say,
“O Lucy ! I was quite wrong in my
“opinion of Mr. or Mrs. Such-a-one.
“I hope you have not mentioned what
“I thought of them.”

“You are the severest satirist that I
“know,” said her ladyship ; “but upon
“this occasion I am sure I shall never
“plead guilty. You and Arabella shall
“meet ; and if you once pronounce
“me right, your dear mother will be
“easily led to think me in future in-
“fallible. But,” continued she, glanc-
ing her eye upon her watch, with a
painful consciousness that the moment
of separation was near, “I have a fa-
“your

" your to ask. I know that you and Mr.
 " Evans object to the introducing this
 " dear girl to scenes above her fortune ;
 " I know too that you are tenacious of
 " her valuable society ; yet remember
 " our early endearments, and spare her
 " to me as soon as the engagements into
 " which I am now thrown will permit
 " me to claim her." Mrs. Evans, with
 a dejected look, answered that her fa-
 ther should decide.

Lady Monteith felt the significance of
 this answer, and expressed a sense of
 [it by dropping a tear upon Mrs. Evans's
 hand, which she at that moment pressed
 to her lips. " Dear, amiable, second
 " daughter," said the good woman,
 " my anxious wishes, my fondest affec-
 " tions, follow you into that thorny
 " and intricate path which you are now
 " going to tread. I understand enough
 " of the great world to know that a
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"character like yours must attract ob-
 "servation, illiberality, and envy. Your
 "desire to please will be called vanity ;
 "your sprightliness, levity ; your fine
 "accomplishments, an invidious affect-
 "ation of superiority. Through this
 "dangerous trial, remember, innocence
 "alone will not support you, and sen-
 "sibility will betray you. Keep in
 "mind my oft-repeated maxims, that
 "no human character can be per-
 "fect, and that it is dangerous to our
 "peace to contemplate with too steady
 "an eye the failings of those with whom
 "we are intimately connected."

"I will remember all you say to me,
 "and all I have said to you," resumed
 the amiable bride. "I will frankly
 "own, that my inexperienced heart
 "flutters at the idea of the pleasures
 "and the distinctions which await me.
 "I shall have many trials, perhaps many
 "ene-

“enemies ; but where shall I find friends
“to whom I may so safely disclose all
“my heart, as I do to my dear Mrs.
“Evans and to my Lucy ?”

“Make your husband your friend ;
“endeavour to gain his confidence,
“and beware of forming dangerous in-
“timacies, unsanctioned by experience,
“which may tend to lessen your at-
“tachment to him. Strive to exalt the
“preference your charms have excited
“into firm esteem ; and if you should
“not at first succeed, or not so com-
“pletely as you wish, do not sink into
“dejection. Remember, time will over-
“come every difficulty, and patience will
“soften every sorrow.”

Miss Evans, who had left the room
during the preceding speech, now hastily
re-entered. “I have brought you,” said
she, “my ever dear Geraldine, one other
“little keep-sake.” Lady Monteith

opening the paper, found a purse, which she remembered her friend had been anxious to finish with the most perfect neatness.

"I cannot take it," replied the countess; "I know that when you netted it, you said you meant it for Henry Powercourt."

"He wants none of my purses; you shall have it, for you will value it most."

"But if you have promised it, my love," observed Mrs. Evans.

"No—he never knew my intention, and never shall."

"He is infinitely more careful of his valuables than I am," resumed the countess, mingling a smile with her tears; "You have given me so many nice things already, and I am such a random creature—if I should lose it"—
"Though

“ Though you are going to be very
“ happy, I am certain *you* would not
“ lose my present without sincere pain.
“ You will never forget me, Geraldine ;
“ you will often write to me ; and if I
“ should not be punctual in my replies,
“ you will never call it neglect.” The
friends wept a moment in each other’s
arm ; lady Monteith’s eyes asked her
Lucy to accompany her part of the way
to the manor-house ; but as the latter
made no offer of that kind, she forbore to
name her request. Once more she re-
peated her assurances of inviolable re-
gard, and they parted.

I have gratified my own taste by en-
tering into a diffuse description of this
interview. Perhaps it was in no way
more extraordinary than common life
often affords. They who, disdaining
the softer touches of the mental pencil,
only enjoy the bold design which
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sketches the wildest storm of the passions, where the sun of reason never beams, and where discretion never controls the raging elements, will pass over the uninteresting page that describes attachment without caprice, dejection struggling with a sense of propriety, and simplicity affecting a disguise which he cannot support. Such readers will not join in the reflections of lady Monteith, who, reviewing, during her solitary walk home, her friend's behaviour, and rightly ascribing her unwillingness to accompany her to a fear of being led to discuss a subject to which she was unequal, exclaimed, "Dear, artless, amiable girl! Where shall I find another Lucy?"

Early the next morning the Monteiths set off for London. At parting with his daughter, sir William discovered the deep yet firm regret of disin-

terested affection. "I shall miss you
 "very much, my dear love," said he;
 "but it is for your good, so I shall not
 "complain. I must look for amuse-
 "ment to your letters now, instead of
 "your pretty prattle. Don't be cast
 "down, child; for I shall not be dull
 "if you are happy." The tender
 Geraldine could only answer with her
 tears.

At this instant Mr. Evans, who had
 been from home the preceding morn-
 ing, interrupted the family party by his
 characteristic adieus. "I trust, my dear
 "lady, you are going to make many
 "hearts happy; you will leave many
 "aching ones behind you here." Then
 turning to lord Monteith, whose bosom
 glowed with sentiments which Nature
 meant he should have been better ac-
 quainted with, "Providence," said the
 good man with patriarchal simplicity,
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“has intrusted you, my lord, with a
“rich jewel. Wear it at your heart.”

“That I will,” replied the young
earl, shaking him cordially by the hand ;
“and for the share you had in giving
“it to me, remember, when I am
“prime minister, you shall be arch-
“bishop of Canterbury.” A sudden
glow of pleasure brightened the general
dejection. Sir William, enjoying the
tribute to his daughter’s worth, thus haf-
tily extorted from her lord, more than
he would have done a studied compli-
ment, tenderly pressed his son-in-law’s
hand, and led his drooping daughter
to the chariot. The carriages drove
off. London, and its round of plea-
sures, soon regained possession of his
lordship’s mind, unaccustomed to the
finer emotions ; while his lady’s eyes
oft turned to take another view of
Powercourt. “Farewell,” said she to
herself, “ye dear scenes of my youth-

“ful pleasures. Farewell to the home
“and the protection of the best of fa-
“thers ! I enter upon an untried, and,
“if I may trust to the experience of
“others, a perplexing world. Will
“the husband of my choice, the future
“master of my destiny, treat me with
“such uniform tenderness as my in-
“dulgent parent did ? Will he guide
“my inexperienced steps, like my dear
“Mrs. Evans ? or, may I unboresom to
“him my inmost soul, as I did to my
“sympathising Lucy ? Ah ! could I
“but be sure that I shall return in a
“few months satisfied with my own
“lot, find my dear father unchanged
“in health and spirits, Mrs. Evans
“well, and my Lucy happy !” A tear
obscured her radiant eyes, when my
lord roused her from her reverie, by
telling her the number of miles they
were from London.

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CHAP. XV.

Come then, the colours and the ground prepare !
Dip in the rainbow, trick her off in air,
Choose a firm cloud before it fall, and in it
Catch, ere she glance, the Cynthia of the minute.

POPE.

ON the close of the first day's journey lady Monteith accidentally inquired how far they were from Oxford. "Admirably recollected !" cried his lordship ; "I have always intended to go there, "and never could find time. We will "take it in our way to London."

"Don't you recollect," said the countess, "that by the last accounts "from Scotland our friends intend to be "in town before the end of this week ?"

"O ! we shall run all over Oxford "in a day or two. Beside, suppose

M 3

"they

“ they do get to Portland-place before
“ us, my housekeeper is the civilest,
“ best-bred creature you ever saw, infi-
“ nitely superior to the myrmidons near
“ Kinloch-castle. She will make them
“ very fine courtesies, and they will
“ glide about and get over their first
“ wonder before we reach town.”

“ But will that be perfectly respect-
“ ful and accommodating ?”

“ My dear Geraldine, if you take
“ so much pains to accommodate other
“ people, they will soon give you a
“ surfeit of courtesy. My good aunt
“ in particular ; she has had her own
“ way years enough ; and for fear she
“ should take up any idea of managing
“ me, I shall shew her at first that I
“ mean to please myself, and never care
“ what she or the world think about
“ it.”

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The excursion to Oxford being now as irrevocably fixed as the ancient laws of the Medes and Persians, lady Monteith privately dispatched her own servant to town with the best apology her invention could frame to her expected guests.

On entering the seat of the Muses,

——“ Mother of arts

“ And eloquence, native to famous wits,

“ Or hospitable, in her sweet recess,

“ City or suburban, studious walks and shades ;”

the countess felt a refined pleasure, uninterrupted by any painful recollections, till her lord, as he hurried her from the Theatre to the Ratcliffe Library, suddenly exclaimed, “ Have you not some
“ curiosity of your own to exhibit at
“ Oxford,—a quondam lover ? How you
“ blush, you little tyrant ! I must see
“ him.---I once intended to cut the
“ fellow’s throat ; but I am quite in
“ charity with him now. Where is
“ he ?

"he? we will have him with us at the hotel this evening."

"Indeed, my lord," stammered lady Monteith, "I am afraid he cannot come. He is very ill."

"Ill!--O! then we will go and see him. What college does he belong to?—Come, we can go to his rooms first."

"Not without some previous notice," said the countess. "His complaint is on his spirits, and we shall only agitate him. It is a low fever."

"A low fever!" replied his lordship with a loud laugh. "A strong love-fit you mean. You spirited him off very cleverly, Geraldine, and just in time to save his life; for I had written a challenge for him. I wonder, by the bye, why you came to refuse him; for he must be one of your own

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“own accommodating sort of people,
 “to give up a charming girl to a stran-
 “ger, and afterwards fall sick about
 “her himself. We will have him;
 “the sight of you, and a bottle or two
 “of claret, will cure his low fever.”

“You are all in the wrong,” replied
 lady Monteith, who could scarcely sum-
 mon sufficient spirits to parry this at-
 tack; “but all your manœuvres shall
 “not make me gratify your curiosity
 “by explaining this enigma. I will
 “write to Henry, and ask him to give
 “us the meeting; but pray, remem-
 “ber, that he really is unwell, and also
 “naturally timid and reserved. Spare
 “your raillery therefore; for, though
 “you will be wide of the mark, his
 “sensibility is so acute, that it may
 “give him pain.”

Lord Monteith, with truth, declared
 that he never designed to give any one
 M 5 uneasiness.

uneasiness. On returning to the inn her ladyship dispatched the following letter :

“ TO HENRY POWERSCOURT, Esq.

“ It is impossible to pass through
“ Oxford without feeling a solicitude
“ for the health of my valuable friend;
“ and if it be sufficiently restored to
“ bear the exertion, your company this
“ evening would afford me peculiar
“ pleasure. Lord Monteith joins anx-
“ iously in this wish. His impatience
“ to be introduced to one, on whose
“ merits he has often heard my father
“ expatiate, would have carried him to
“ your apartments ; but I doubted how
“ far you might be able to bear his
“ visit. Come to us, my dear Henry,
“ if you possibly can ; perhaps my
“ lord's playful vivacity may enliven
“ you. To see you well and happy is
“ the

“ the only addition now wanting to the
“ felicity of

“ Your ever-faithful

“ and grateful friend,

“ GERALDINE MONTEITH.”

The servant who carried this epistle returned with the intelligence that the gentleman had been very ill, and was gone for change of air to some friend's house a few miles in the country ; but that his servant happened to come to his lodgings to inquire for messages just as he was there ; and that he had given him the letter to carry to his master.

“ How far was his friend's house from
“ Oxford ?” The servant could not tell.

“ Did he know the name of the gen-
“ tleman at whose house he was ?” No.

“ Nor the name of the place ?” Still
a negative—“ Blockhead !”—but I shall
omit the epithets by which my lord

expressed his sense of disappointment; for though they conveyed to his terrified lady the idea of his being in a towering passion, habit made them pass trippingly from his tongue without any consciousness of having uttered them. While lady Monteith therefore, pale and trembling, reflected upon the uniform suavity of her father's manners, a turn or two across the room set the earl to rights again, who, advancing to her with a smile which perfectly became him, begged the favour of her, as he had lost the diversion of quizzing a chum, to amuse him with a game at piquet.

No other incident worth recording occurred during the remainder of their journey to London. On their arrival at their town residence, a number of servants ranged themselves on each side the entrance to welcome their approach.

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Though Monteith had not bestowed much trouble in sacrificing to the Graces, he possessed all the natural elegance of a Belvidere Apollo. He presented their new mistress with a look of benevolent freedom, which his features were particularly calculated to express; and he told them, that she was come to make them all as happy and as good as herself. The countess's heart felt agreeably elated. She cast a benignant glance around, and advancing to the housekeeper, who stood at the head of the female party, after an assurance of general good-will to all, she pressed her hand with that graceful affability which was concomitant to all her actions; when the words "Lady Madelina" instantly changed the scene.

Her ladyship was indeed advancing *in propria persona*, bridling with stiff dignity, rendered yet more stubborn by

a smothered sense of affront. She congratulated her nephew in terms solemnly sententious, and then bent her knees to the bride with the overstrained lowliness of 'proud humility. Monteith, though he knew his aunt's character, felt thunderstruck; and the timidity which her ladyship's dress, figure, and manner excited, annihilated all the polished elegance of Geraldine. The parties, therefore, stood like what the sportsmen call hounds at a fault, till lady Madelina waved her hand for her niece to go up stairs first; which the latter declining, the former wheeled round, and, in the same consequential manner, reascended to the drawing-room. Lord Monteith, as he followed in the procession, muttered to himself, "No! "this will never do."

The ceremony of being properly fixed in their chairs took up some minutes; and

and after three introductory hems, Geraldine ventured to try the sound of her own voice by expressing her regret that they were not in town at the time of lady Madelina's arrival; the only answer to which apology was a majestic bend. Again the young countess made an effort at conversation, by hoping that her ladyship's health had not suffered from the fatigue of her long journey; another bend, and a negative, was the answer. "Silence again reigned unrivalled queen," till her empire was terminated by the entrance of her sworn enemy lady Arabella, who, having given the finishing arrangement to her dress, swam into the room to eclipse her new sister in those qualities of wit and beauty for which she had heard she was distinguished; and certainly, if feature alone could denominate the latter, and volubility the former, the
fair

fair Geraldine must have hid her diminished splendour.

Nature, who had bestowed upon the earl of Monteith the striking advantages of a fine figure and an agreeable countenance, had been still more bountiful to his sister, whose face and person had all the regular loveliness which the vainest mother could ever desire for a darling daughter. These superior attractions appeared in her earliest years; and as the system of policy pursued by the house of Macdonald did not add any lucrative temptations to the charms of their females, this rare bounty of nature was treasured with the most unremitting care, as a sure means of securing an honourable establishment. The plan of her education consisted in avoiding whatever was bad for the eyes, bad for the shape, and bad for the complexion; and in acquiring whatever was

per-

perfectly elegant and suitable for a young lady of the first fashion.

I have already mentioned the mournful incidents which in her seventeenth year banished the lovely Arabella from London, and confined her within the secluded walls of Kinloch. The same event put a stop to her improvements and her pleasures. The confined education of her present protectress, lady Madelina, had not even paced the narrow circle of female accomplishments; and her observations had been wholly limited to the neighbourhood where her local pre-eminence allowed her to reign undisputed sovereign. No wonder, therefore, that she conceived her niece to be a miracle of erudition, because she could speak French with tolerable volubility; or that her jejune performances in music and painting should meet with unbounded celebrity among the visitants
at

at the castle, where few understood, and none dared to censure. But, exclusive of the pleasure which even gross adulation bestowed, the three years which she spent in Scotland formed one continued period of mortification and regret.

Lady Madelima's recollection of those early difficulties which had at last influenced her to reward sir Simon's long and generous attachment, determined her to rescue her niece from similar trials by adopting her for her heiress to those ample possessions which her uxorious husband had alienated from his own family. But upon becoming personally acquainted with her, and finding that all the beauty and all the virtues of the race from old Donald to the present times were centered in the peerless Arabella, she grew passionately fond of her, or rather blindly partial to
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what she fancied the summit of all human excellence. To banish her chagrin, and to weaken reciprocal attachment, she treated her with unbounded indulgence; but as indulgence always defeats its aim, it neither made the young lady grateful nor happy. On the contrary, she grew every day more capricious, vain, and wretched. She could not love or respect a person who neither checked her faults nor strengthened her virtues. She soon learned the art of turning her aunt's weakness to her own advantage, and considered the favours she received as a tribute rather than an obligation. Without one sensible friend to enlighten her judgment, without one correct model by which to form her character, she mistook affectation for elegance, and fastidiousness for delicacy.

Nor did her dislike of retirement proceed from a relish for polished society
and

and refined pleasures. She only thought that the power of her charms was limited to too narrow a sphere; and she wished, like the fair Phaëton of the last age, to "obtain the chariot for a day," that "she might set the world on fire."

Though an invitation to London had at first inspired a heartfelt complacency for her new sister, her reported graces had soon obliterated that idea, and ingrafted in its stead the baneful germ of envy. Had the lovely Geraldine entertained similar ideas, their first interview might rather have been called the battle of the beauties, than an attempt to conciliate sisterly affection and reciprocal regard.

Proteus, the poets tell us, could assume a thousand resemblances; but, whether he seemed a lion or a fawn, he was Proteus still. Like him, lady Arabella could tack an infinitude of
modes

modes on her natural habit; but, whether it was the manner of the dove or the magpie, she was still at heart the vain, cold, selfish Arabella. After a long consultation she had determined, that the brilliant would be best suited to her intention of intimidating her rival; and having arranged her dress in a manner better adapted to the magnificence of a court-ball than to the ease of a private party, she burst upon her astonished sister-in-law, who in vain attempted to trace a remote resemblance of that artless wild simplicity which her creative imagination had assigned to the unknown "Highland lassie."

The introductory compliments were now dispatched in a manner diametrically the reverse of the dry reserve of the former conversation. Lady Arabella was in ecstasy. The careless simplicity of the bride's travelling habit could not pretend

pretend to any competition with her own profusion of ornament; and both the beauty and the vivacity of Geraldine suffered from the chagrin which the manners of her visitors inspired. Conscious superiority always speaks in hyperbole. Arabella had been immensely tired with her journey, was rapturously delighted with her new relation, and infinitely solicitous that they might soon become the strictest of friends.

While she spoke, her eye reverted to every object, except the subject of her enthusiastic admiration. Her aunt viewed her with a complacency which the countess thought her features could not possibly have assumed, but which was sometimes interrupted by observing what effect this sparkling conversation had upon the Monteiths; for, though it could not possibly answer any end, lady

Madelina

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Madelina would have felt mortified if even her nephew did not acknowledge how infinitely his sister excelled his wife. Her observations that evening were limited to a short period: his lordship had business to transact with his banker, which could not possibly be delayed; and he soon left them, whispering his lady, "Go to bed if you are tired of them."

Geraldine did not conceive herself warranted to follow her lord's advice. She made some attempts to gain a share in the conversation; but the playful wit and easy sweetness which at Powercourt "engrossed all hearts and charmed all eyes," had now lost all its power, and she sunk quietly into the less brilliant but useful character of a hearer; while her guests enumerated the old titles which might be revived in the house of Macdonald, and settled the

the exact place in which the representative of their honours ought to walk at the next coronation.

They separated at an early hour. The young countess did not find herself disposed to sleep. Unaccustomed as she had been to contempt and to unkindness, Powerscourt and the friends of her youth rushed full upon her mind. "What," said she to herself, "am I to expect from strangers, when those with whom I have just contracted the tie of kindred are even studious to shew their dislike of me?" To this reflection followed a fear, that her lord would leave her, unprotected, to their pride and folly; and the bitter tears which she had hitherto restrained coursed each other down her cheek.

At that instant lord Monteith entered. He had met with a party of his old friends, who would felicitate him upon his

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his nuptials, and he was returned home in a very joyous humour. "I was very sorry to leave you, my dearest Geraldine," said he; "I know it was rude and awkward to go out the first evening after you came home; but it was not in the power of man to endure my consequential aunt, or the ridiculous automaton that Arabella has become. Did they get a little more tolerable after I left them? Ha! you are in tears—I swear by heaven, that if they have given you the least cause for uneasiness, they shall both leave my house to-morrow morning."

Lady Monteith knew enough of the earl's temper to be convinced that this threat would be fulfilled. Her prudence not only determined her instantly to avert from herself the dreadful imputation of violating the harmony of the family into which she was adopted, but it

made her also resolve to assume the amiable character of a mediatrix if any contentions should in future arise. Happy in the hope that she should every preserve her avowed pre-eminence in her lord's affections, her sorrows seemed to dissipate like a morning mist, and she answered with a smile, that she had been wicked enough to be entertained with the eccentricities of the strangers, which doubtless proceeded from too recluse a mode of life, and would certainly be worn off by a little commerce with the world. "I have," continued she, "enough
" to condemn myself for ;—I have been
" a petted child, and, feeling your absence this evening more than I ought,
" Powerscourt returned to my memory.
" But do not reprove me. My heart,
" Monteith, is formed for strong attachments. I have preferred you to my
" father's house and my early friends;

“ yet must I ever ‘ remember that such
 “ things were,’ and ‘ that they were most
 “ precious.’ The young earl gazed at
 her with the tenderest regard, vowed
 eternal affection, and for a moment
 wondered how he came to find out such
 an angel.

But while the amiable Geraldine thus
 pursued her early design of securing,
 meliorating, and correcting the heart of
 her lord, his noble relations were em-
 ployed in adding a little adventitious
 fuel to their own native fire. The
 stranger was arraigned (but not at the
 bar of justice or candour), and found
 guilty of the following offences, which,
 as they were supported by positive evi-
 dence, could not afterwards be disprov-
 ed: First, she must be nobody, not-
 withstanding Mrs. Archibald Frazer, of
 Annale, had affirmed that the Powerf-
 courts were a good family; for lady Ma-
 delina had detected her in the very act

of shaking hands with a servant ; beside, lady Monteith's terrified manner at first seeing her, proved that she had never been in company with a lady of quality before. Secondly, she was no beauty ; for she was not above the middle size, and her complexion no better than a brunette ; her features too had nothing of the Rubens' cast, and were totally dissimilar to all the first-rate toasts in the picture-gallery at Kinloch. Thirdly, she was no wit ; for she never tried at a repartee all the evening, and her expressions were as common as those of a house-maid. This degraded creature being no longer an object of terror to lady Arabella, she resolved to try if she could not live upon good terms with her ; and lady Madelina observed, that as the girl seemed good-tempered, and had a large fortune, perhaps her nephew, who was but a thoughtless kind of a young man, could not have done much better.

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CHAP. XVI.

Good humour only teaches charms to last,
Still makes new conquests, and maintains the past;
Love raised on beauty will like that decay,
Our hearts may bear its slender chain a day;
As flow'ry hands in wantonness are worn,
A morning's pleasure, and at evening torn;
This binds in ties more easy, yet more strong,
The willing heart, and only holds it long.

POPE.

THE ceremony of congratulatory cards now commenced. It was followed by visits from those ladies who wished to form a closer intimacy, and by the introduction of the bride and lady Arabella at court. The death of sir Simon, though now nearly banished by subsequent events from the memory of his amiable relic, was still too recent to allow of her joining in these ceremonies.

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She could, therefore, only hear from lady Arabella, what she would rather have seen, that the bride was completely outdone upon every occasion. The fair narrator's laudable design of making her aunt happy tempted her to some small exaggerations. The Grecian model of beauty, which the form and face of Geraldine resembled, was more consonant to the public taste than the round visage, uniform regularity of features, and auburn locks of the northern beauty. The figure of the latter was indeed more conspicuous; but being less correctly moulded by fashion, it seemed to yield in elegance to the polished symmetry of the ever-graceful countess. The lily and the rose were rivalled by Arabella's complexion; yet lilies and roses may be bought at Warren's, which by candle-light look almost as well as nature; but what cosmetic can bestow that "pure and

and eloquent blood" which spoke in Geraldine's face, and might almost justify the opinion of the poet, "that her body thought?"

If from their persons the observer reverted to the dress and manners of the sister beauties, the palm indisputably belonged to the countess. In her selection of ornament the correctness of her taste led her to reject what was exuberant and superfluous; and by studying suitableness rather than splendor, she ever appeared with the graceful propriety of a woman of fashion; while lady Arabella was lost in the maze of tassels and flounces. The terms upon which sir William Powerscourt lived with his neighbours were not calculated to inspire his daughter's mind with any ideas of inherent superiority, further than what her own merit justified. His family pride was not of a hostile character.

racter. It rather taught him to respect himself, than to despise others. Educated in the spirit of benevolence and universal good-will, if any indications of latent vanity sometimes appeared to check the nobler growth of Geraldine's soul, Mrs. Evans was ever at hand to eradicate the pernicious weed. The internal principle thus secured, her native good sense and observation taught her to copy the exterior of politeness from the best models which her situation afforded; and on her entrance into the first circles, she only appeared to want a little familiarity with peculiar customs, to realize in its fullest perfection the character of a well-bred woman.

On the contrary, lady Arabella's constant attempts to shine announced the effort, and missed the effect. Hauteur could not command respect from those who, equal or superior in rank, allowed

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allowed nothing to the claims of a longer pedigree. Confessedly inferior to most young ladies of her own station in acquired graces, the mere attraction of beauty, though soon felt, was as soon forgotten. The flippant observation and severe sarcasm, which at Kinloch-castle passed for eloquence and wit, could not endure the test of more competent judges, who cannot relish a sneer unless recommended by some other quality than mere malignity. When to these considerations is added the reflection, that the world is generally more inclined to approve those who solicit their favour than those who command their attention, it will not be wondered at, that general opinion loudly proclaimed lady Monteth a very charming woman; and that if ever the silence of polite reserve was interrupted by repeated inquiries of

“What do you think of lady Arabella

“Macdonald?” the most candid answer generally received was, “Nothing very striking.”

The Philosopher who attempts to describe the secret powers of nature will not expect to trace the footsteps of the sovereign Queen “in crowded cities” or “the busy haunts of men,” but in the sequestered glen or uncultivated mountain. The Moralist who, by a description of the human character, wishes to correct the failings of the human heart, will not place his sphere of observation in those scenes where fashion prescribes a genteel uniformity of manners. The crowded rout, where every body is well-bred; the drawing-room, where every body is well dressed; the public breakfast, where every body is lively; and the opera, where every body is in ecstasies, may prove an author’s intimacy with the great world; but,
however

however the reader may be dazzled by the glare of finery, the mind commonly complains of meagre entertainment. A few general observations will suffice to describe the first month of lady Monteith's acquaintance with fashionable life. She trod the giddy maze of dissipation with firm but graceful step. The voice of flattery, though soothing to her ear, excited no dangerous emotion. Her character retained its primitive virtues, her heart remained faithful to the impression which was now consecrated by indelible ties, and her judgment continued to prefer the mild lustre of conjugal happiness to all the glare of fashion, and all the fascination of pleasure.

The earl of Monteith still continued to think his Geraldine the most perfect of all human beings, and himself the most fortunate man in the world. It

was impossible for him to think otherwise ; for all his young friends declared him a happy fellow, and his courtly acquaintance pronounced his lady to be the most divine creature ever seen. It was astonishing, they said, how she could acquire such an air of high ton in her secluded situation ; and still more wonderful, that the resplendent fame of the fair recluse had not pervaded the rural shades by which she was surrounded. “ Your taste in beauty, my lord,” they added, “ is perfectly accurate, and “ the world is infinitely obliged to you “ for introducing this paragon to its “ adoration.”

His lordship always went home in raptures from such conversation ; but his lady was either gone out with a party, or the presence of his noble relations qualified his transports, and convinced him that one angel cannot protect

test the joys of the domestic paradise, if spirits malign over-leap the sacred inclosure. The hours intended to be devoted to the endearing charities of private life were most commonly usurped by high dispute and sour contradiction, to which the softening observations of the countess could not always give the air of sportive raillery. Lady Arabella's positive refusal to attend a public breakfast given by one of her brother's greatest intimates, and to which he had thoughtlessly engaged his female inmates without previously consulting lady Madelina, disconcerted the earl so much, that he determined even to give up the pleasures of London, and to betake himself to the wild shores of Loch Lomond, rather than continue where he could not be master of his own actions. To his loud complaints against feminine perverseness, his lady vainly attempted to oppose her observ-

observation, that though lady Arabella's refusal to go had rather an air of pertinacity, it merely restricted her own conduct, and could by no means be construed into an attempt to control his perfect liberty. The truth was, lord Monteith was as desirous of governing as his sister was unwilling to obey ; and his querulous hatred of restriction led him to scrutinize every word, look, and action, which seemed to militate against the wisdom of his decisions and the freedom of his conduct. Lady Arabella's refusal to go to the breakfast had been aggravated by some reflections on the inviter's rudeness in not returning her curtesy at Ranelagh ; to which lady Madelina added, that a neglect of politeness was the true criterion by which a plebeian family might always be discovered. His lordship so bitterly resented this sarcasm, that, regardless of the

the fair fame of the titled Macdonalds now committed to his charge, he resolved to convince the world that peers of the realm may be as unpolite as commoners ; and though lady Madelina and her niece talked of removing to a villa near Richmond in about a month, he determined not to endure the temporary thralldom, but immediately to emancipate himself from their fetters, by setting out for Monteith ; and, with the inconsistency which frequently marked his character, he appointed the very morning fixed for his friend's public breakfast for his own departure.

Lady Monteith's heart, as I have already hinted, was not wedded to the amusements of London. Her natural taste and early habits did not teach her to start affrighted at the name of solitude, nor did the recollection of mild colloquial pleasures induce her to regret
the

the society she was going to leave. On the contrary, had the manner been better suited to the project, the proposal of visiting her lord's hereditary possessions would have met her entire approbation. She would have rejoiced in the prospect of renewing those ties of gratitude and generosity, which had been long dissolved ; and the hope of reanimating a forlorn desert region would have afforded equal gratification to her native benevolence and inherent love of distinction. But while she recollected her lord's often-repeated preference of London and abhorrence of Scotland, she regretted that pique and displeasure, not duty and conviction, had wrought the desired change. Ruminating with deep regret on those traits of her husband's character, of which this incident gave her a full view, she shuddered at the idea of her own misery, if the fatal period

period should ever arrive when she should lose her present influence over his affections, what was she to expect from passions so irritable, so impatient of control, and from a disposition so little influenced by the restraints of decorum, or the opinion of the world !

Mrs. Evans's remembered admonition diverted her mind from pursuing this melancholy theme ; but, as she traced the chain of her parting precepts, she felt that there was one observation with which she never could coincide. Should the event which her fears anticipated ever take place, she knew it would be a misfortune which time could never overcome, a sorrow which patience never could soften.

While the sweetly tempered mind of the young countess framed extenuating apologies, and concerted a thousand little acts of attentive kindness, to mitigate

tigate the painful effects of her lord's self-willed negligence upon the minds of his friends, she was agreeably surprized to find affairs in the best train possible, and a greater degree of cordiality and good-humour arisen from what she suspected must have proved the death-blow to family amity. No sooner had the earl announced his intention of setting out for Scotland, and trying to make his old castle something habitable, than the active imagination of lady Madelina flew back to the times of her grandfather, when Monteith was in its greatest splendor. She again anticipated the sound of the bugle-horn, reverberating round its projecting towers, to summon the clan to attend their feudal chieftain to a hunting party or a curling match. Her mind now recurred to the grandeur of a public day, the court glittering with splendid visitors, the desolated
halls

halls resounding with the cheerful notes of the bagpipe, and numerous servants in gaudy liveries conducting the astonished guests through the long galleries to a magnificent entertainment. Fired at the idea, her countenance lost its usual asperity, and with an air of melting kindness she applauded the wisdom of her nephew's project. "By all means," said she, "endeavour to restore the castle and its vicinity exactly to the same state in which it was at the time of your great-grandfather. Never be seen beyond its walls without a train of archers and broadsword-men. Your ancestors would not even appear at Stirling without fifty attendants, most of whom were Macdonalds in the right line. It struck an awe into the neighbourhood ; for not one of these gentlemen
"ever

“ ever condescended to engage in any
“ mercantile pursuits, but dined every
“ day at the laird of Monteith’s table.
“ The country was not then over-run
“ with upstart traders, who, by intro-
“ ducing manufactories, as they call
“ them, corrupt all the common people,
“ and render them insolent to their su-
“ periors. I remember, even when I
“ was a child, that if a coach with the
“ Macdonald arms quartered upon it did
“ but pass through Glasgow, all the in-
“ habitants ran to the door, and testi-
“ fied their respect by suitable ges-
“ tures; but now you may traverse
“ the whole town, and not one loom
“ shall be stopped to pay you a proper
“ compliment.”

Let not the reader suppose that lady
Madelina’s harangue was intended to
have terminated so abruptly. It might
have

have extended to the length of the expostulation of the ghosts in Gray's "Long Story," had not Arabella taken advantage of a cough to rejoice that her dear sister was going to recruit a little in the wholesome air of the Highlands after the fatigues of dissipated London. The pleasure which glowed in her countenance did not, however, in truth, result from her hope that the faded cheek of Geraldine might soon resume its pristine roses. In spite of the contempt which she affected, the absence of a rival who abridged her conquests and humbled her vanity was the real source of Arabella's joy.

Lord Monteith was so delighted to find his plans thus cordially approved, that his resentment immediately softened, and he politely offered his aunt the use of his house in London till she could fix herself

herself in an agreeable residence. Her ladyship repaid the favour, by promising to restore all the valuable embellishments which she had surreptitiously conveyed to Kinloch castle, as soon as Monteith was reinstated in its pristine splendor.

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CHAP. XVII.

I rue the riches of my former fate ;
Sweet comfort's blasted clusters I lament :
I tremble at the blessings once so dear.

YOUNG.

THE day preceding that fixed for her departure from London, lady Monteith was painfully surprized by the presence of an unexpected visitor. This was no other than Henry Powerscourt, who, having at last determined to visit Italy, imposed upon himself the severe task of bidding farewell to that treasure, the loss of which had rendered his native country a desert scene, barren of every joy and every hope. Having thus divulged a secret, at which before I only hinted, it still remains necessary to develop the motives that induced this extraordinary lover to refuse the blessing which

which the amiable singularities of sir William Powerscourt had placed within his reach.

From his earliest youth, his susceptible mind had felt the full power of his cousin's charms ; but while his admiration rendered her raillery more exquisitely painful, it prompted the ardent yet unacknowledged wish to acquire every laudable quality which could recommend him to the favour of the loveliest of her sex. His inexperienced heart knew not the nature of that passion to which it was a victim ; if it had, the native rectitude of his mind would have started with inbred horror at a discovery that seemed to stamp every ungenerous, mean, and ungrateful vice upon the unprincipled villain, who dared to lift his selfish eyes to the angelic daughter of his honoured benefactor. So far, therefore, from taking any indirect

direct means to obtain the object of his wishes, those wishes were unperceived even by himself, and he fancied that he cherished no other sentiments than such as could be justified by the ties of friendship and affinity. The general admiration which Geraldine attracted seemed to confirm this idea; and though the inquietude which he ever felt at hearing of her having made any particular conquest might have removed the delusion, he still soothed himself with the persuasion that his anxiety arose only from a friendly solicitude for her welfare, and he forbore to probe the wound till it became too deep to admit of cure.

The terms of the letter in which sir William had summoned him to Powerfcourt excited a wild tumult of hopes and fears, and first convinced him that the interest he took in his fair cousin's happiness was not so entirely abstracted

from selfish considerations as he had supposed. A faithful old domestic, who was the bearer of this epistle, could not forbear telling the enraptured youth, that the general report of the family pointed him out as the heir and son-in-law of their respected master. A thousand expressions of sir William's were now recollected in an instant, and Henry's ardent mind explained their equivocal nature as decidedly significant of the generous plan which had been long formed in his favour. His reception elevated these hopes into certainties; for, though sir William forbore any particular explanation, the uncommon kindness of his manner, and some injunctions to Henry to do such and such things after he was gone, banished every remaining doubt of his intentions.

Nor did Miss Powerscourt's unusual dejection alarm her lover with the apprehension

hension that her sentiments were not in unison with her father's. He thought that a reflecting mind must feel a temporary depression during the period of a decision so momentous to its future welfare. Yet while he regretted the absence of that charming vivacity which he alike dreaded and admired, and anxiously wished that sir William's expected declaration would release him from that silence which his delicacy prescribed, and leave him at liberty to reassure his mistress's virgin heart by protestations of fervent gratitude and unalterable love, he thought even Geraldine herself never appeared so lovely with all her enchanting graces sporting around her, as she did in her present interesting melancholy.

This golden dream soon terminated. On the fourth morning after his arrival at Powerscourt, Henry surprised Geraldine

raldine in an agony of grief too violent to be referred to any other cause than extreme and hopeless sorrow. The solicitude of generous love was instantly awakened, and he entreated her confidence in terms strongly indicative of affectionate sympathy. "If," said the lovely mourner, fixing her radiant eyes upon him with a firm but despairing look ; " if you are indeed the noble disinterested Henry I have ever supposed you, I may yet be happy ; if not, I am a wretch for life. This is not a time for disguise and affectation. My father intends that you should be my husband ; but though I esteem your virtues, my heart avows a preference for another, which I never can surmount. Nothing but misery can result from our union. Be generous, Henry ; and, by refusing me, prevent a disclosure which would be destructive

“destructive to my father’s peace, and
“to which nothing but despair shall
“ever drive me.”

As all language would be inadequate to describe the feelings of Mr. Powercourt, I shall only say, that he silently dropped the fair hand which he had ardently grasped at his entrance, and, after a minute’s pause, stammered out a few words expressive of his resolution to comply with her request. He then hastened to the door. “Stay,” said Geraldine, whose heart, relieved from the burden of her own sorrows, instantly felt for him to whom she appeared to have transferred the insupportable load; “Stay, and hear the effusions of gratitude, esteem, friendship”——“No,” said the tortured youth, breaking from her, “if I stay another moment, I never can resign you.”

His subsequent conduct has been already described, and the mystery of lady Monteith's requiring two thousand pounds a-year to be left at her sole disposal will be explained by observing that she thought even that splendid donative would be inadequate as a proof of her esteem for a man who had evidently sacrificed his own happiness to hers. Her affectionate wishes pointed to Lucy Evans as his best and most suitable reward.

Sir William's resentment at Mr. Powerscourt's supposed indifference to his daughter's merits had soon subsided, and a little after the departure of the Monteiths he sent him a friendly invitation to come and see him, with an assurance that he was ready to serve him in whatever way he thought proper to point out. Henry determined upon this visit, with the expectation that his melancholy

lancholy would be relieved by frequenting the scenes in which he had nursed his infant passion, and that the conversation of his respected benefactor would sooth his saddened spirits. The air of dejection and indisposition which was spread over his countenance excited the kind attention of his benevolent kinsman. He took him all the walks and rides he used to take with Geraldine, and, by way of diverting him, constantly dwelt upon a theme which he thought must be pleasing, the affection of lord Monteith, and his daughter's happiness. "It is very strange," sir William sometimes said to himself, "that " Henry refused Geraldine, and yet he " don't like to hear of her being happy " with her husband ; and after all, they " never used to fall out ; and Henry is " a very good young man, with nothing " of envy or malice in his disposition."

He saw but little of the family at the rectory. Mrs. Evans declined rapidly ; her husband seemed to need all the consolations of strong sense and christian fortitude to support the shock, and the gentle Lucy sunk, like a broken lily under the beating of "the pitiless storm." She seemed studiously to shun conversing with Mr. Powerscourt ; and when an interview was unavoidable, she was not only dejected but reserved. As he once attempted to recall to her remembrance the joyous scenes of juvenile amusement, when the manor-house and the parsonage seemed alternately the temple of innocent cheerfulness, she turned suddenly, and, gazing at him with a penetrating smile, observed, "that the temples remained, but they had lost the goddess who irradiated the scene."

Disap-

Disappointed in his expectations of finding consolation in those objects which used to administer delight, Henry at last answered sir William's inquiries on what he could do to serve him, by remarking that he thought the salubrious climate of Italy might be of service to his health, and that the numerous objects which it presented to the curious eye might dissipate the languor which indisposition excited. Though sir William was convinced that England, particularly Caernarvonshire, was the most healthful climate in the world, and contained a sufficient number of wonders to entertain any rational man, yet he thought that the whimsies of sick people should be treated with the same indulgence as their palled appetites. His assent was accompanied by a liberal allowance ; but he charged him to stop in London, and, if lord Monteith and Ge-

raldine had not left it, to make their house his home for a few weeks. "The
"company of your cousin," said he,
"will do you good; and my lord is
"still livelier than she is. Beside, you
"may have an opportunity of getting
"the best medical advice the kingdom
"affords; and, I charge you, don't be
"guided by outlandish physicians while
"you are abroad, for they never can
"understand what is proper for an
"English constitution. I have no
"doubt, Henry, that your good sense
"will keep you from running wild, as
"many of our young fly-about travel-
"lers do; and I dare say you will not
"disgrace my regard for you, by pre-
"tending, when you come back again,
"to like other countries better than your
"own."

No physician at that time residing in
London who "could minister to a
mind

mind diseased," or who could "pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow," Mr. Powerscourt did not apply for medical assistance; and he regretted that the established laws of society compelled him either to visit the fair troubler of his peace before he left England, or, by attempting excuses to which his ingenuous nature was unequal, excite suspicions of a secret which he flattered himself was confined to his own bosom. He called at Portland-place at an unseasonable hour, and without previously announcing his intentions. He was, however, admitted, contrary to his hopes, and found himself in the countess's dressing-room before he had acquired sufficient fortitude to support the trying interview. He advanced with timid steps, resigned her offered hand with respectful coldness, and glancing his eyes over the

happy envied Monteith, took a chair, and attempted a perplexed conversation.

His lordship immediately found that his intended raillery had lost all its enticing piquancy. The dejection, embarrassment, and evident indisposition of his rival affected his good nature, and he strove by repeated attentions to dissipate his confusion. But as it rather increased than diminished, his lordship recollected that his behaviour might have an air of insult ; and after two or three attempts to occupy his own mind by reading the charades written on a fire-screen, he at last considered, that the most conciliating conduct he could adopt would be to take himself out of the room, which, after desiring Henry to spend the day with them, he immediately did, with too much precipitation to hear his reply.

Lady

Lady Monteith was by this time sufficiently recovered from the perturbation which native delicacy and innate benevolence had excited, to inquire after her father's looks and spirits. She heard with delight that he seemed perfectly well. "And," added Henry, "I have the unspeakable pleasure to say, that, thanks to your generous mediation! I seem completely restored to his favour."

"Do not talk of my generosity, Henry, for fear I should enter upon a never-ending theme—But our friends at the rectory—Can you tell me any good news of them?"

"Mrs. Evans declines rapidly—she cannot continue long."

"O, my dearest Lucy," said the countess, bursting into tears, "excellent, forlorn girl! who will comfort you!"

"Can

“ Can those be forlorn whom you
“ love?” replied Henry. “ Your friend-
“ ship, Geraldine, is a blessing which
“ must compensate for every other loss.”

“ You forget that my present situa-
“ tion imposes duties upon me which
“ no longer leave me at liberty to fly to
“ that dear girl to comfort her filial sor-
“ row. Does she seem sensible of her
“ approaching calamity?”

“ I do not know; I saw very little of
“ her. Can you tell me, lady Monteith,
“ why I have been so unfortunate as to
“ lose Miss Evans’s confidence?”

“ You cannot have lost it; I know
“ her sentiments too well; she regards
“ you with all the esteem your merit de-
“ serves.”

“ I thought myself a blank in the crea-
“ tion, banished from the good opinion
“ of every one except your excellent
“ father.”

“ Indeed

“ Indeed, Henry, you must cast aside
“ this misanthropic humour. It robs
“ you of all the amiable candour na-
“ tural to your character.”

“ I trust, lady Monteith, I shall find
“ it the disease of the climate. In
“ eight-and-forty hours I hope to bid a
“ long farewell to England, to all my
“ sorrows, and—” he just recollected
himself in time to forbear adding, “ and
“ to you.”

“ Let me not,” said the countess in
evident emotion, “ engross any more
“ of your time, which must be fully
“ occupied with preparations for your
“ journey. We shall, I trust, meet
“ on your return, with the reciprocal
“ pleasure our early interviews afforded.
“ Permit me to address to you those
“ sentiments in writing which I find
“ it impossible to utter in conversa-
“ tion.”

He replied, "Your letters, madam, will be invaluable." Finding his resolution unequal to the task of further conversation, he presented his address, bowed, and withdrew.

As Henry Powerscourt will not for some time appear again upon the scene, I shall subjoin lady Monteith's first epistle to him, with his answer. They occasionally corresponded during his residence abroad; but the remainder of his letters were irrelevant to the subject of this history.

"TO HENRY POWERSCOURT, Esq.

"Do not accuse me of departing
"from the delicacy of my sex, if the
"warm interest which your welfare
"and happiness excite induces me to
"adopt a freedom in my expressions
"which our near affinity and long
"friendship alone can justify. Far from
"feeling

“ feeling the cruel pride of conquest,
 “ my heart participates in your dejection so strongly, that while I fancy
 “ myself the cause of your unhappiness,
 “ I think it is selfish in me to enjoy
 “ that cup of blessing which would
 “ otherwise be my portion.

“ I have reconsidered my conduct
 “ from my girlish days. Youthful levity may have led me into indiscretions; but my conscience acquits me
 “ of the base coquetry of endeavouring
 “ to excite hopes which I never meant
 “ to confirm. Let the friend whom I
 “ shall ever esteem, after a retrospect
 “ of his own conduct, declare what
 “ part of his behaviour expressed sentiments too lively to be applicable to
 “ the affection of a relation, and the
 “ intimacy of a companion. If I rightly
 “ appreciate the purity of his principles,
 “ he would have rejected with abhorrence

“rence every design of forming a con-
“nection unsanctioned by my father’s
“approbation, and the knowledge of
“that approbation was not communi-
“cated till my heart had lost the power
“of being just to the merits of the man
“he proposed.

“When I appealed to your genero-
“sity, I knew not how painful a sacri-
“fice I required. The more I feel it,
“the more I venerate your character;
“while my knowledge of your firm
“self-denying fortitude encourages the
“hope that it will be finally exerted
“for the restoration of your own peace
“of mind; that time and absence will
“prevent your exalted spirit from bend-
“ing under an unavoidable disappoint-
“ment; and that your affections will
“at last be just to the merits of some
“amiable woman, who, with virtues
“superior to what I could ever boast,
“will

“ will bless you with the undisputed
“ preference which, much as I esteem
“ your merit, I never could bestow.
“ England, my dear Henry, contains
“ many fair patterns of feminine worth;
“ but I will not point out that excel-
“ lence which your judgment will best
“ discover. Let it suffice for me to say,
“ that, as my happiness must be in-
“ complete while corroded by the for-
“ rows of those whom I tenderly love,
“ prudential considerations need not
“ circumscribe your choice. I owe you
“ a debt of gratitude, which a pecuni-
“ ary recompence, however liberal, can
“ never repay. Let me hear frequently
“ from you, and let me hope that the
“ reasons will soon cease which banish
“ you from the sight of

“ GERALDINE MONTEITH.”

“ To

“ To the Countess of MONTEITH.

“ I confide in your honour for the
“ concealment of a passion which I trust
“ your discernment has alone discover-
“ ed. No blame attaches to the con-
“ duct of the most amiable of women.
“ The audacious, but inexperienced
“ youth, who presumed to admire the
“ most attractive pattern of female love-
“ liness he ever beheld, deserves to suf-
“ fer for the presumptuous hopes which
“ a father’s preference first tempted him
“ to encourage.

“ Anxious to avoid giving pain to
“ that heart which I earnestly pray may
“ long continue the peaceful seat of
“ connubial happiness, I will endea-
“ vour to exert the firmness you re-
“ commend. I will pay a strict regard
“ to my health, and court amusement
“ in

“ in every justifiable form. Should I
“ fail in my efforts to regain my peace
“ of mind, let not the rectitude of
“ your principles start at the idea of
“ inspiring an unwarrantable sentiment
“ in my breast. An innocent attach-
“ ment shall never degenerate into a
“ guilty passion. I remember that you
“ are now the wife of the earl of Mon-
“ teith: I remember that I withdrew
“ my pretensions in deference to his
“ juster claim! Eternal infamy light
“ upon the wretch who seeks to dissolve
“ a bond sanctioned by every law hu-
“ man and divine! Eternal infamy light
“ upon him who, under the pretence
“ of pure sentimental attachment, seeks
“ to exite an undue interest in a ma-
“ tron’s heart! I will never return to
“ England till I can see you without
“ emotion in that character; and this
“ is

“ is the last letter which shall express a
 “ thought inconsistent with the equa-
 “ nimity of an affectionate relation and
 “ a sincere friend.

“ HENRY POWERSCOURT.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

